

the CEREAL KILLINGS

BY JAMES STURM

CHAPTER FOUR

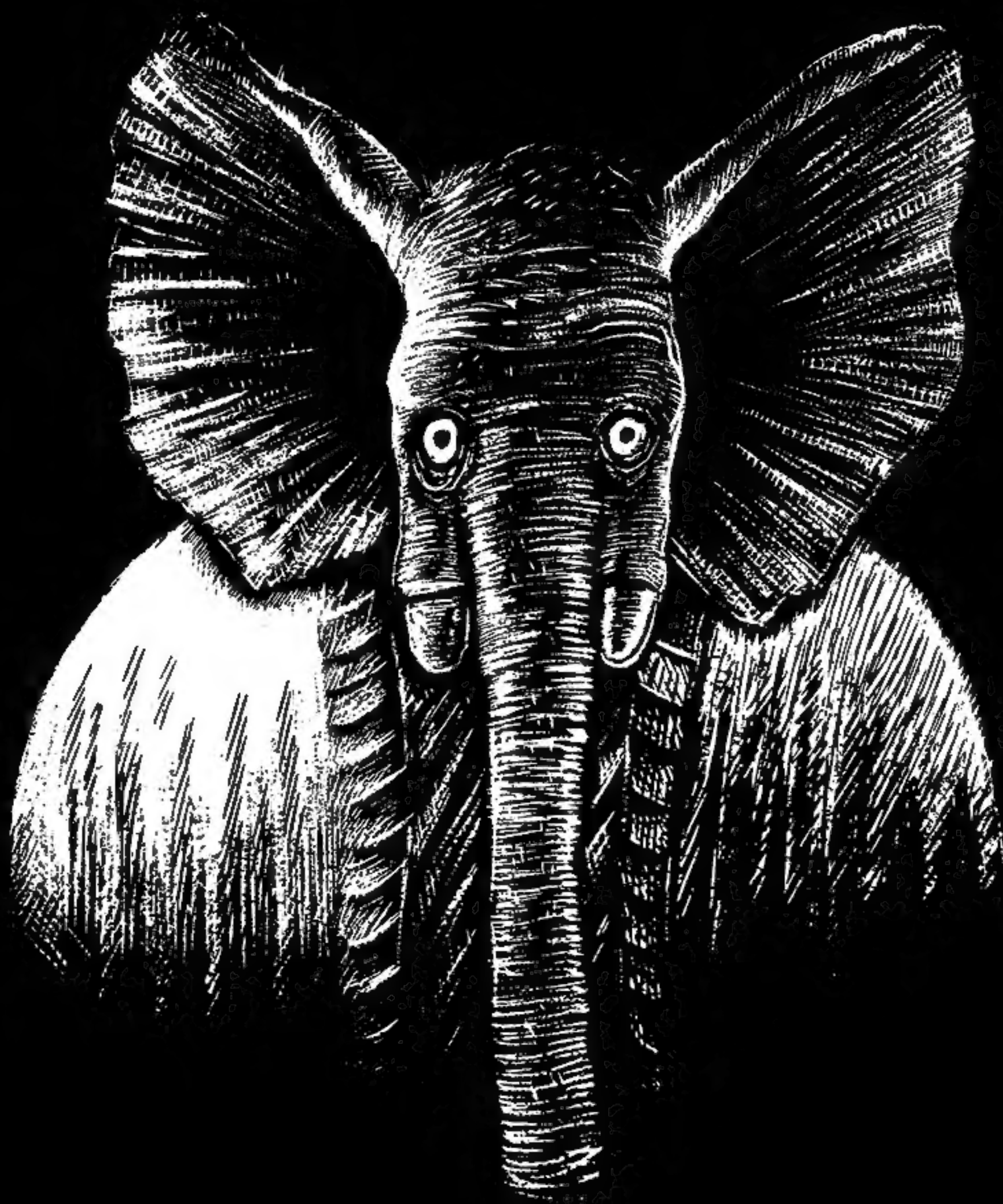
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FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

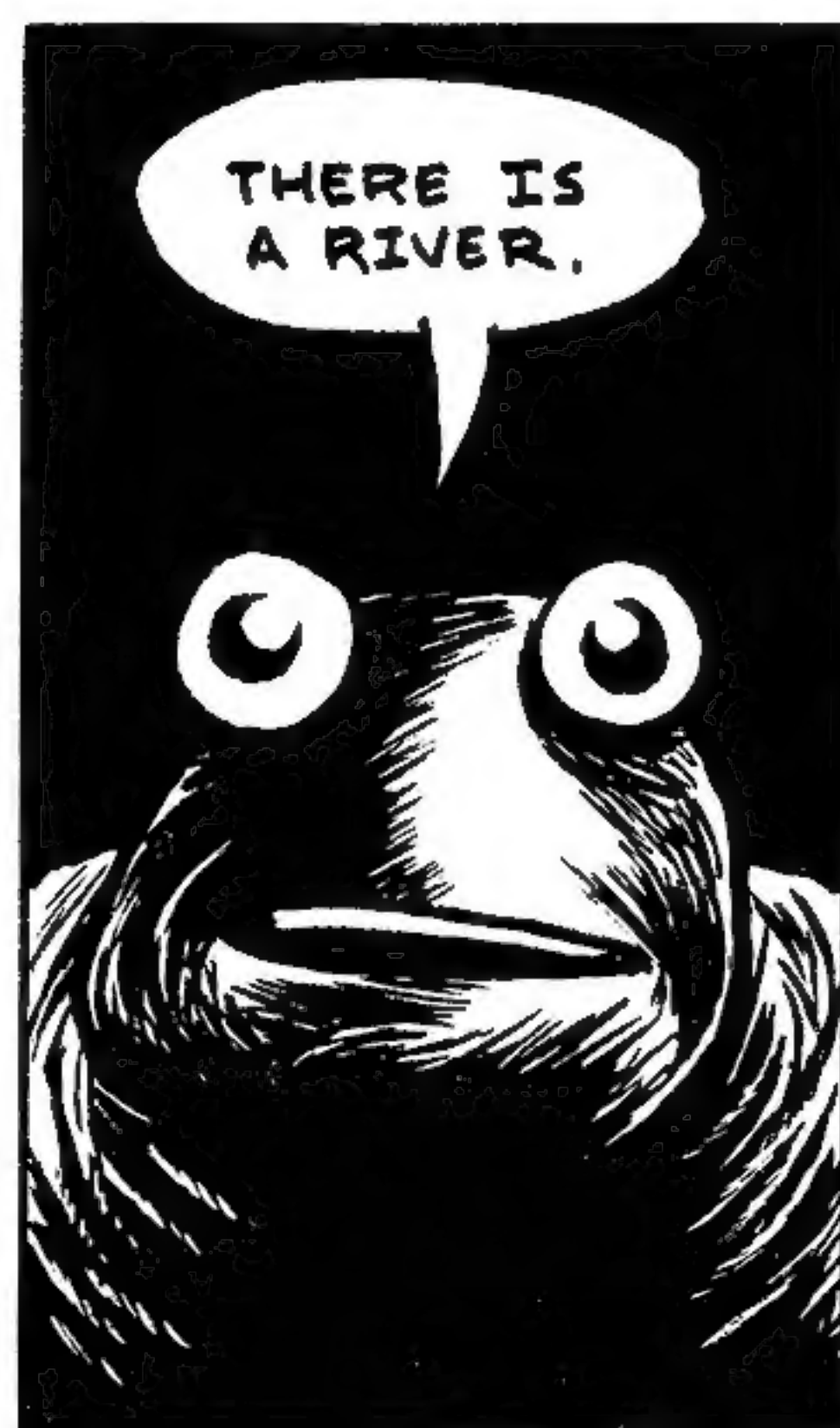
CHAPTER FOUR: VISITORS

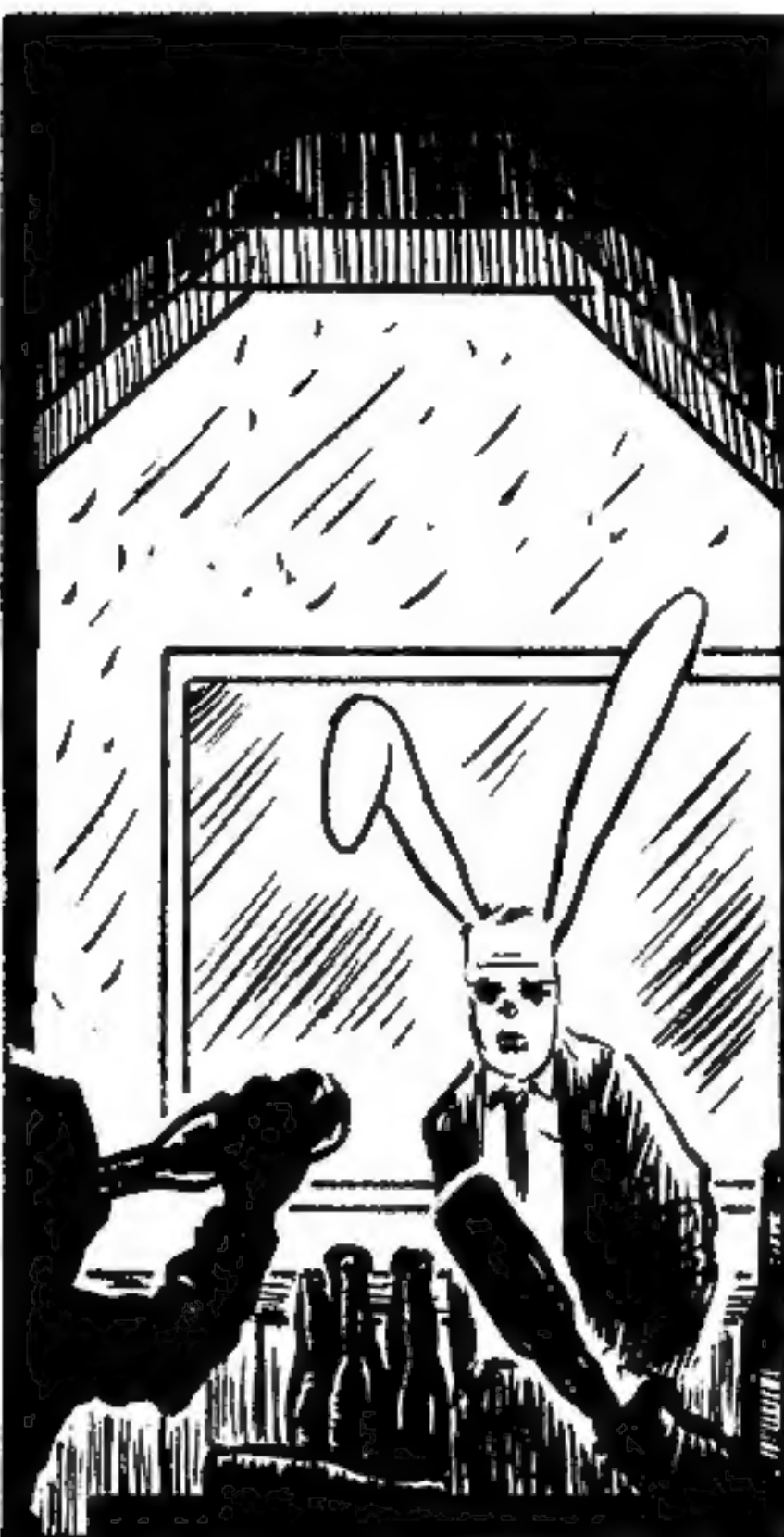


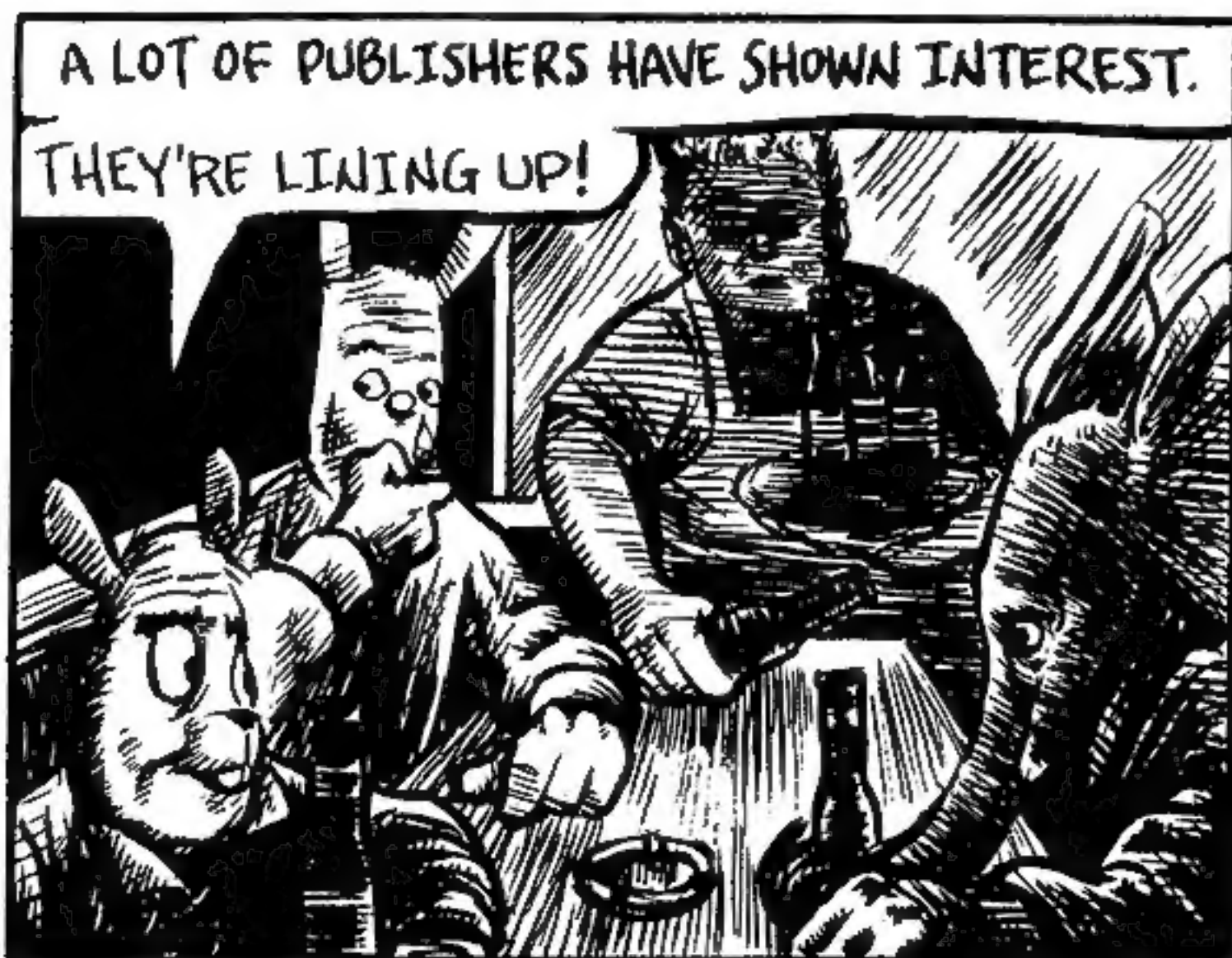
S Y N O P S I S

Carbunkle owns his own business. He markets and sells breakfast cereal. His clients are Cerealebrities. They adorn the boxes that sit on supermarket shelves and appear in television ads. In the past year several of his clients and associates have passed on. The succession of deaths in such a brief period of time has shaken Carbunkle. Since these figures are also in the public eye and so closely linked to the products they sell it has also shaken consumer confidence. Thus business is poor and mascots like Sureshot Shirland are losing their jobs. Carbunkle feels the time is right to market a health food cereal. It would ease both his conscience and perhaps, he reasons, the consumers'. While researching he discovers Corn Cereal, a brand that was represented by a scarecrow in the 1950s. By today's standard, with nothing artificial and no added sugar, it would be considered a health food cereal. It was sold by Kelcog, a large cereal manufacturer. Despite selling well, the product was discontinued. The scarecrow disappeared. Carbunkle seems determined to find the scarecrow and bring back Corn Cereal. However, there is more to the scarecrow than meets the eye and many parties seem to be concerned by Carbunkle's sudden interest. Snap the Elf, the current president of Kelcog, is one; Schmedly, an old, drunken ex-cereal mascot, is another.

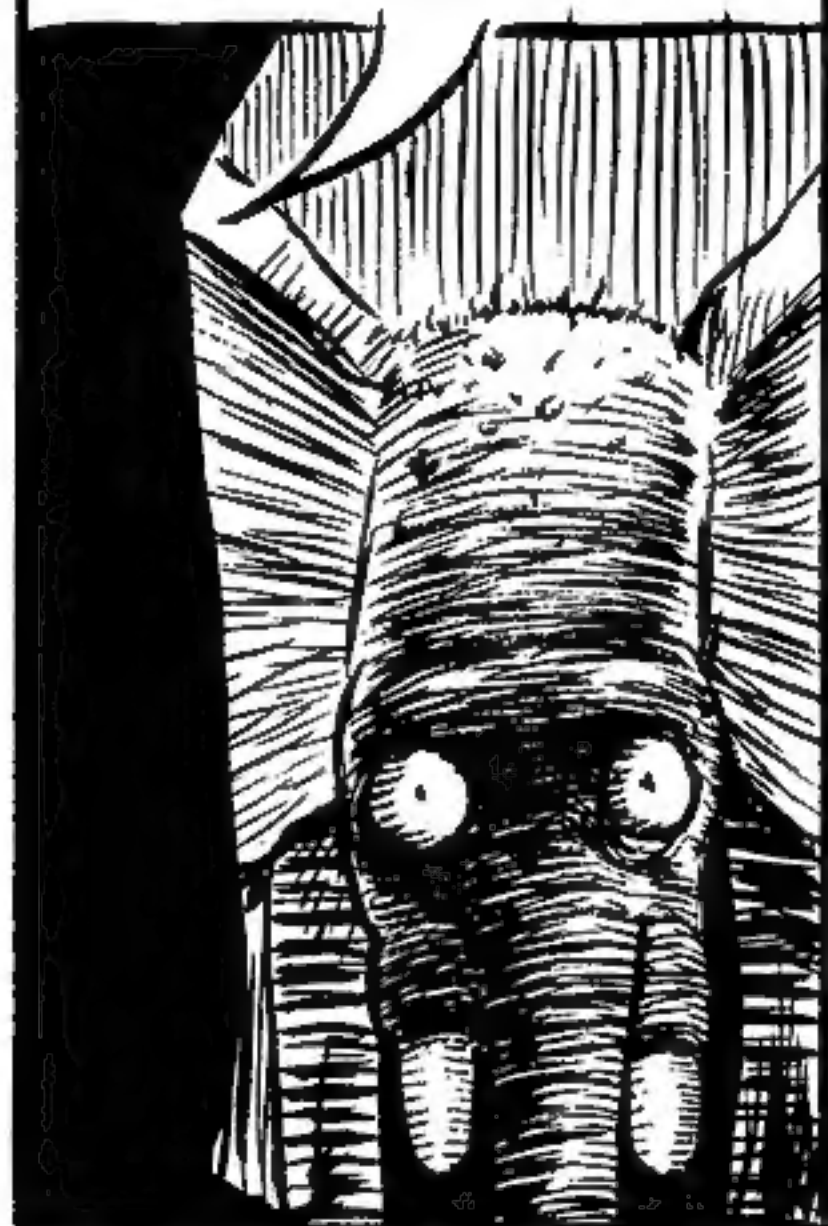
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I ALSO HEAR HE'S
INTERESTED IN
CHARLIE KESSLER-
ANOTHER OLD RELIC.



CHARLIE WAS
A LYING DRUNK!



WHAT'S THE BIG
IDEA YOU ASSHOLE?!
YOU ALMOST SPILT
MY BEER!

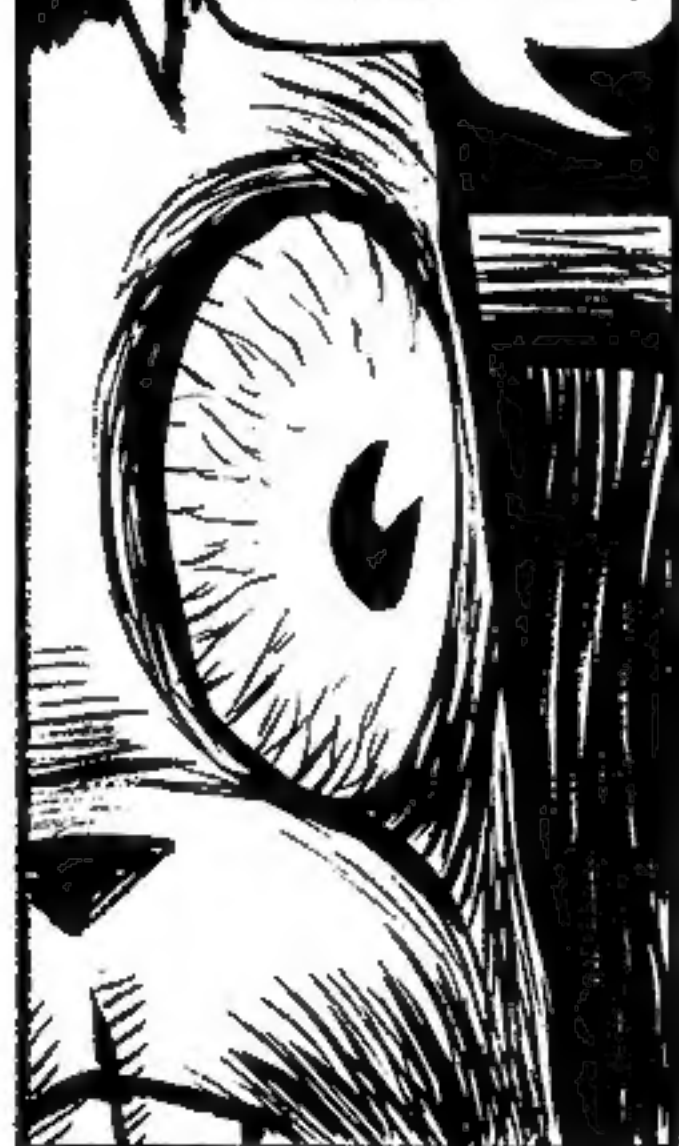


WHAT THE HELL IS
EATING HIM?



SAY, BURT, I JUST
GOT A HOT TIP
ON A PONY, IF
YOU'VE GOT FIVE
GRAND, WE...

FORGET IT!

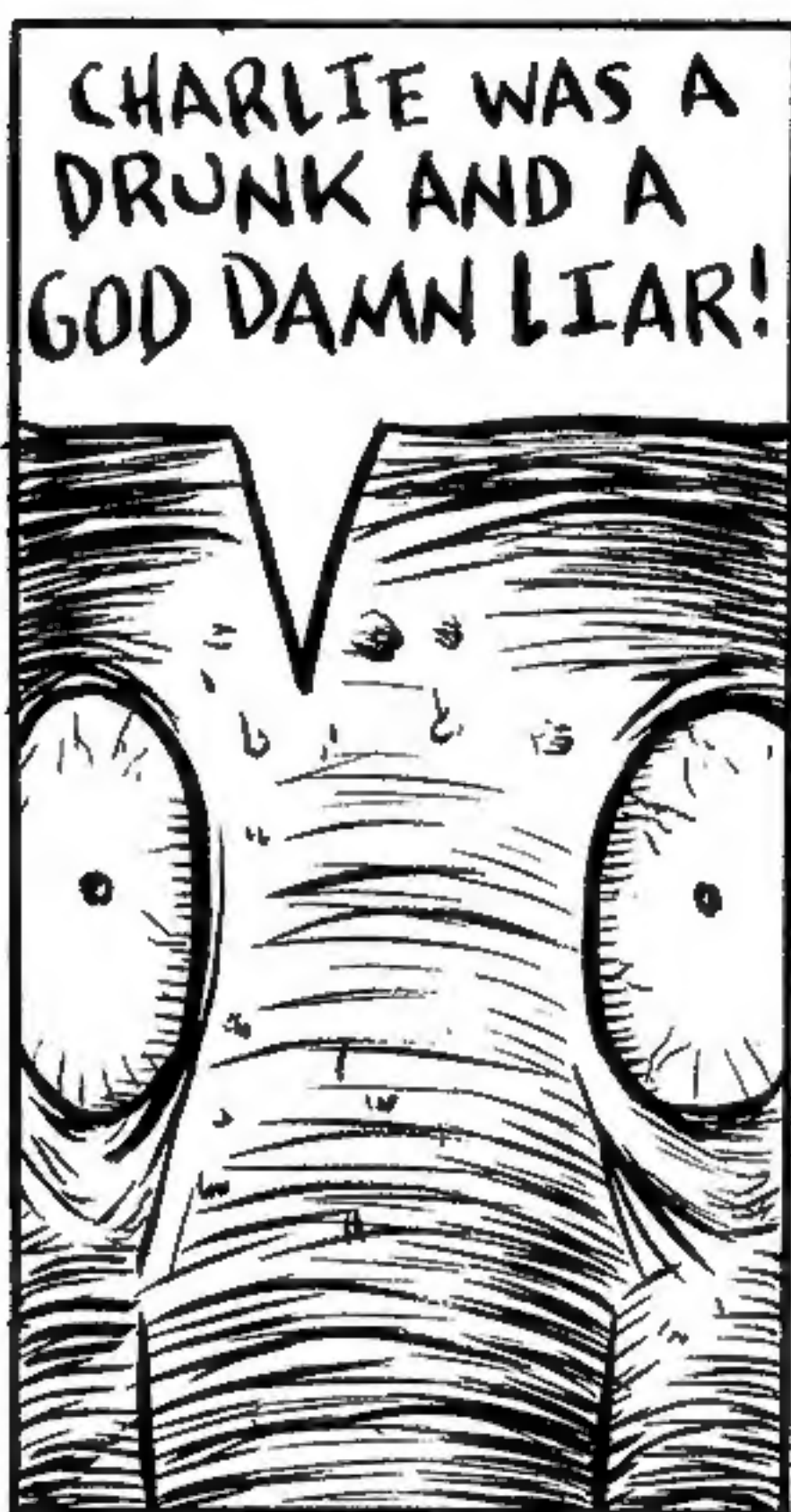


I KNOW ALL
ABOUT YOUR
HOT TIPS.



WELL FUCK
YOU TOO
THEN.





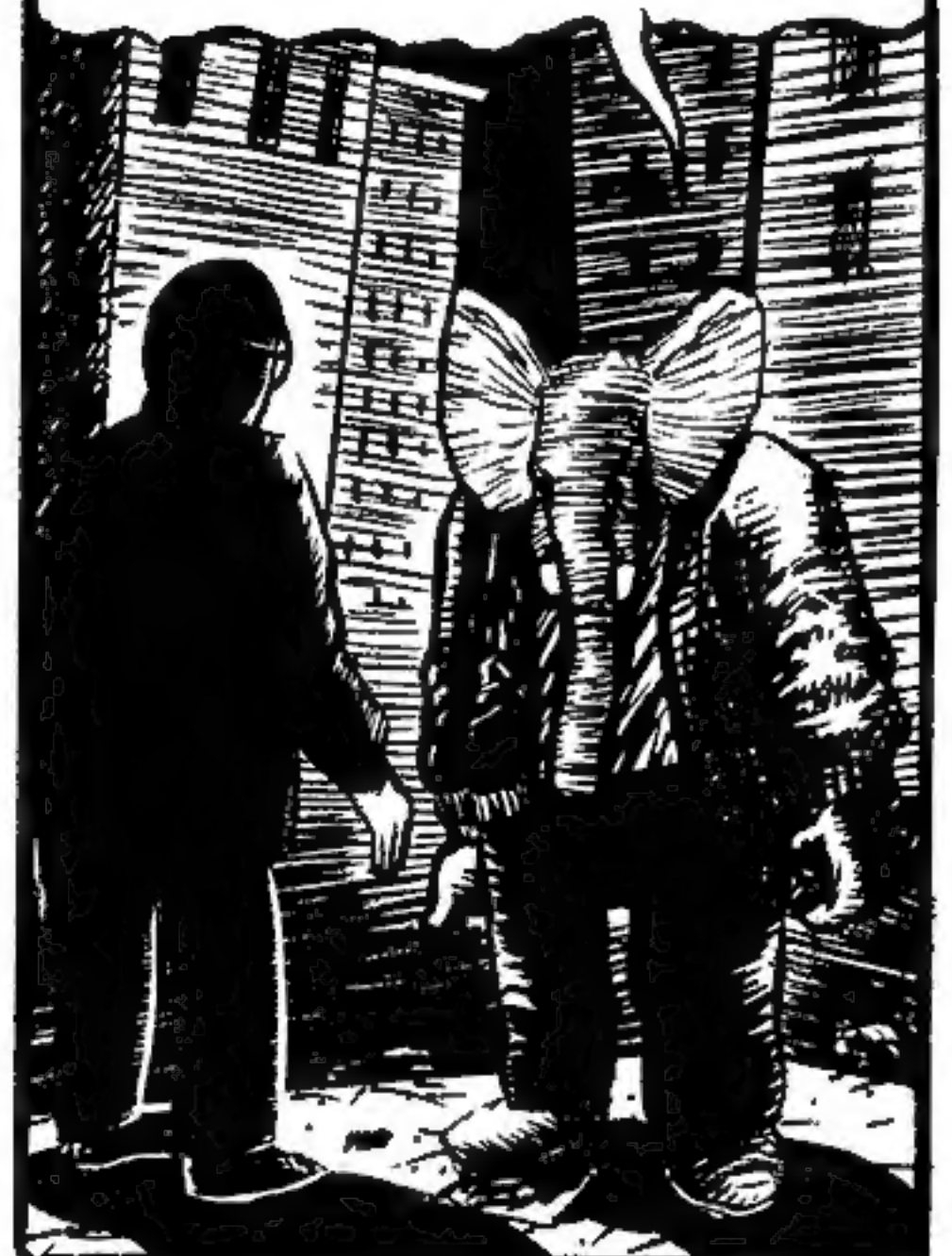
C'MON CHARLIE,
WE GOT ONE MORE
LEFT IN US...



ALRIGHT, SCHMEDLY, WE
ARE GOING TO GET YOU
HOME AND YOU CAN
SLEEP THIS OFF...



YOU WERE ALWAYS SO
GOOD TO ME.



TAXI!



YOU'LL FEEL BETTER
IN THE MORNING.



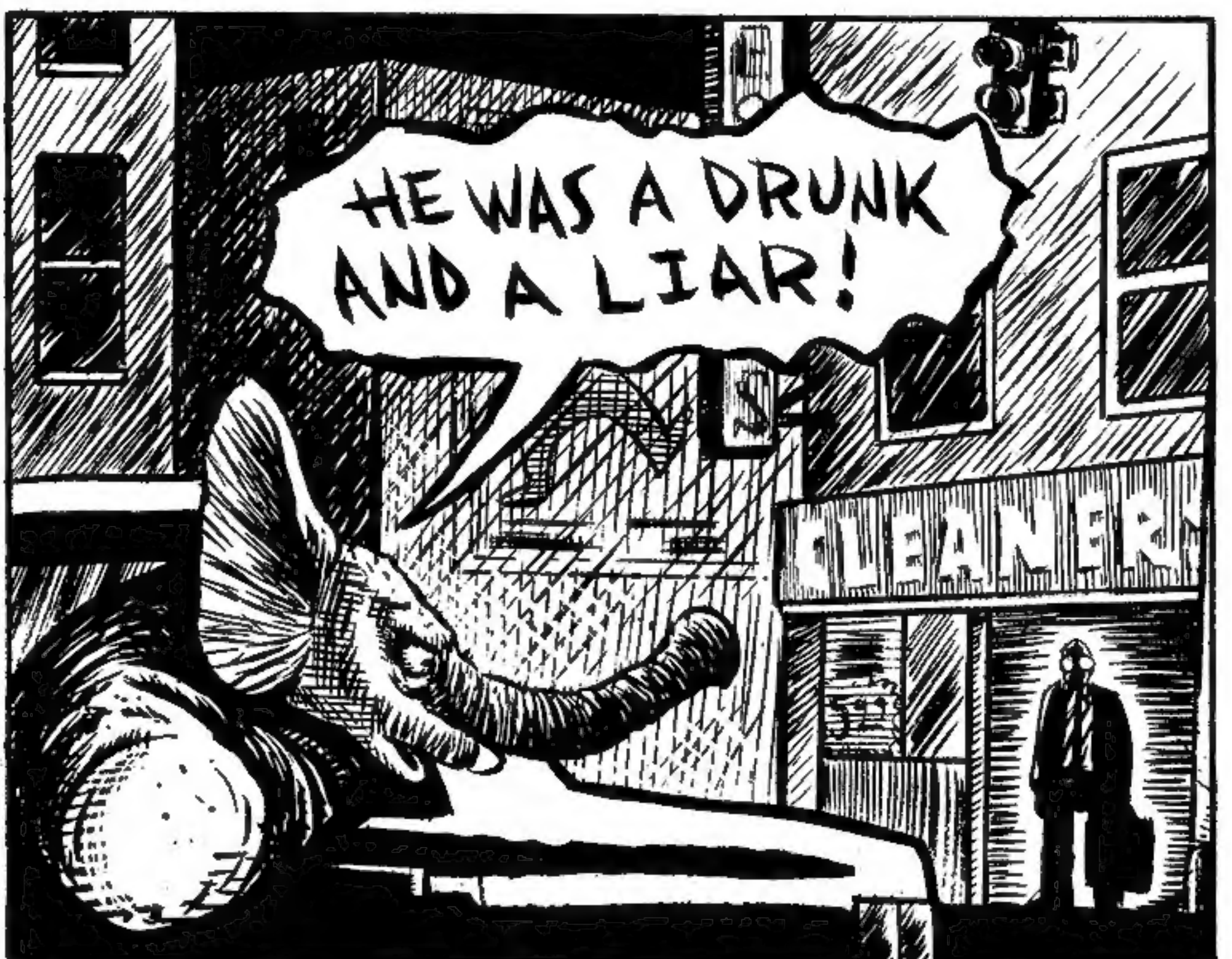
I'LL TALK TO YOU
SOON, SCHMEDLY-
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

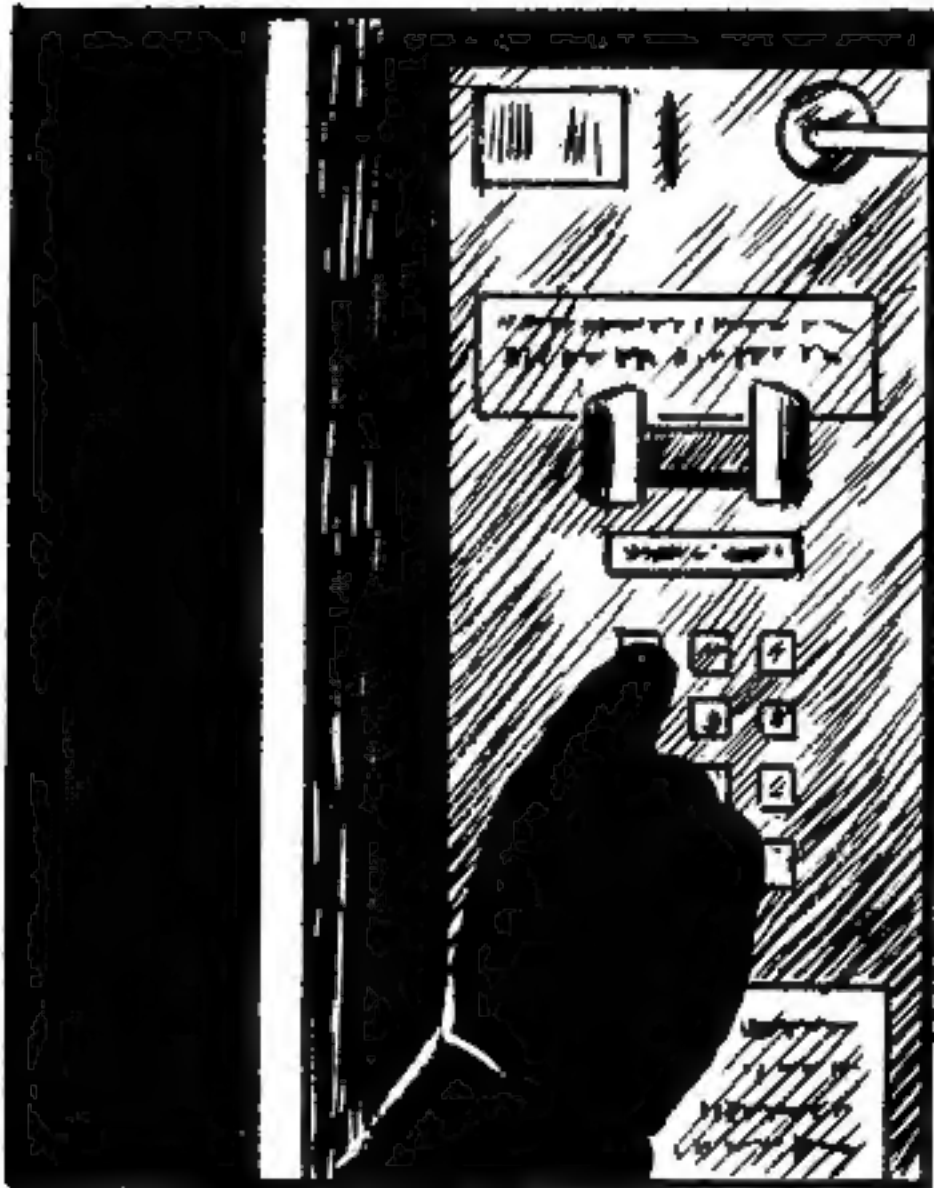


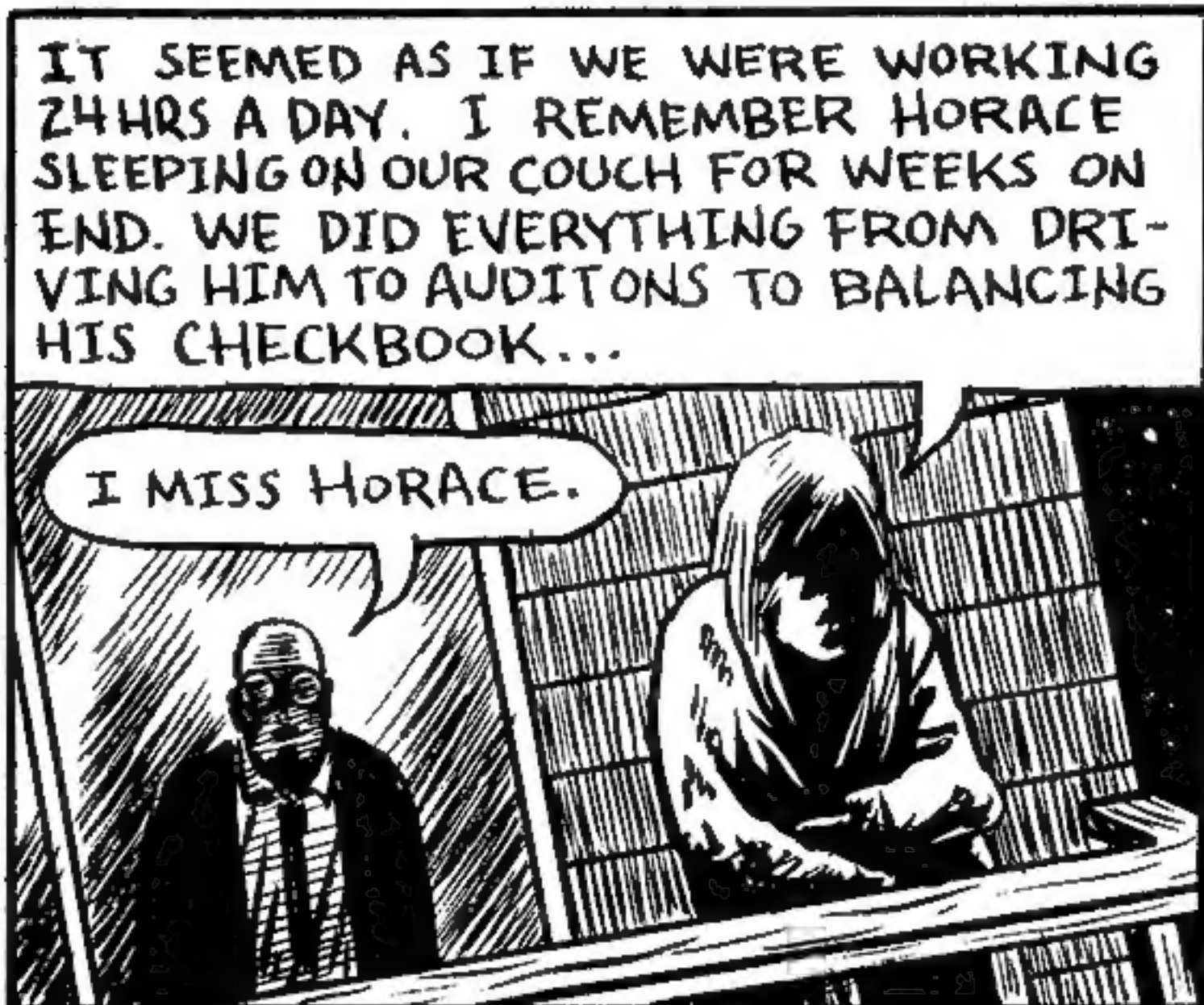
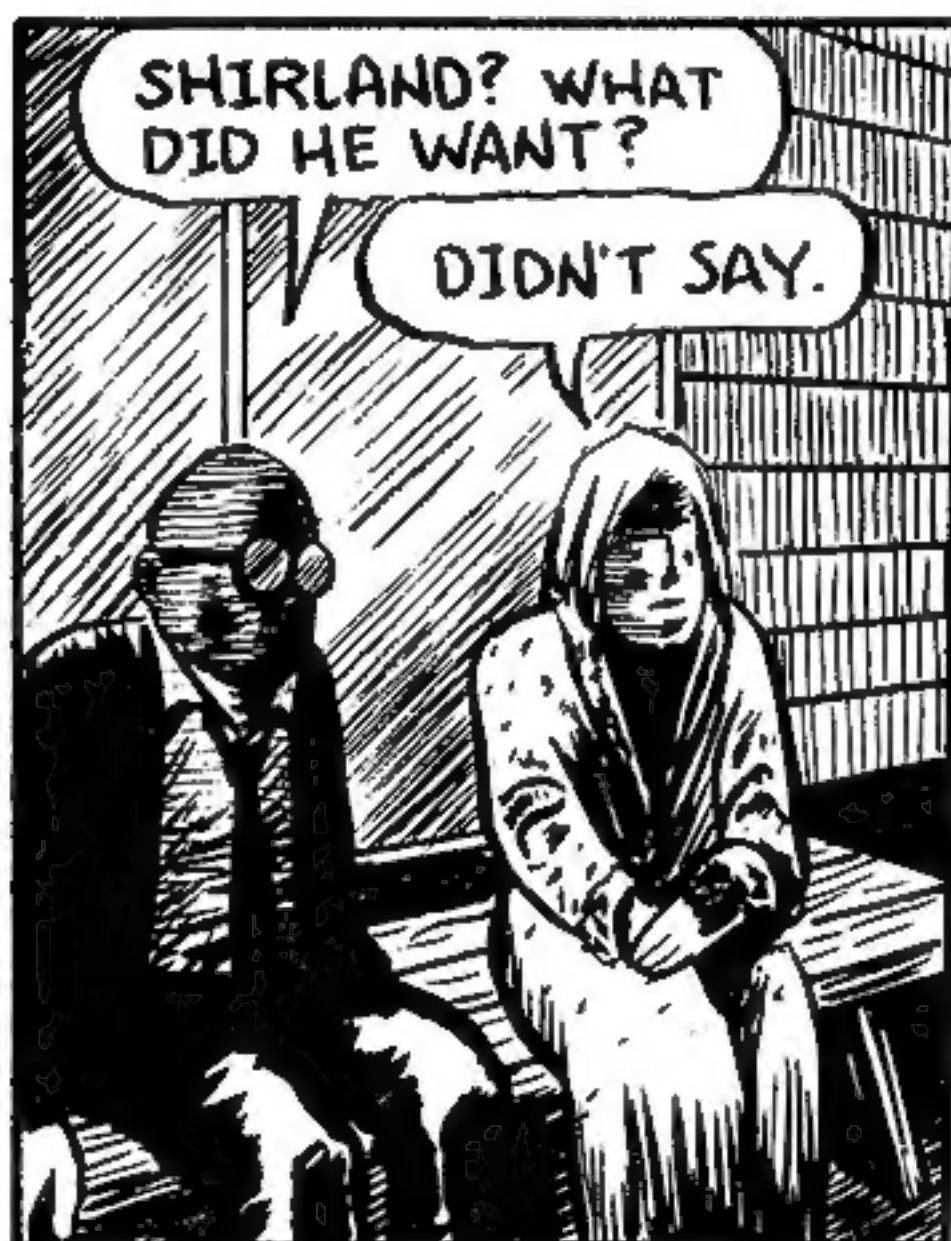
72nd AND RIVERSIDE.

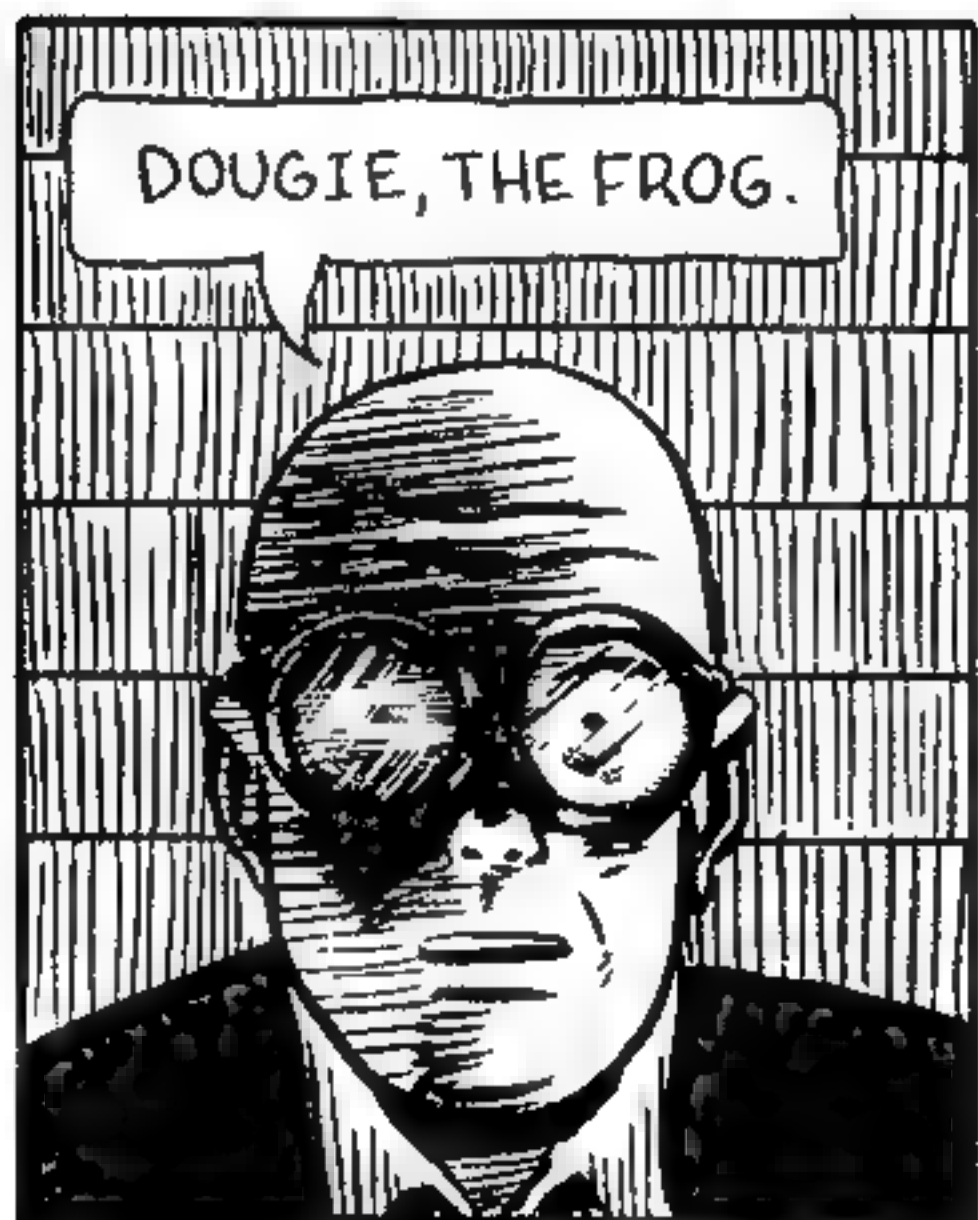
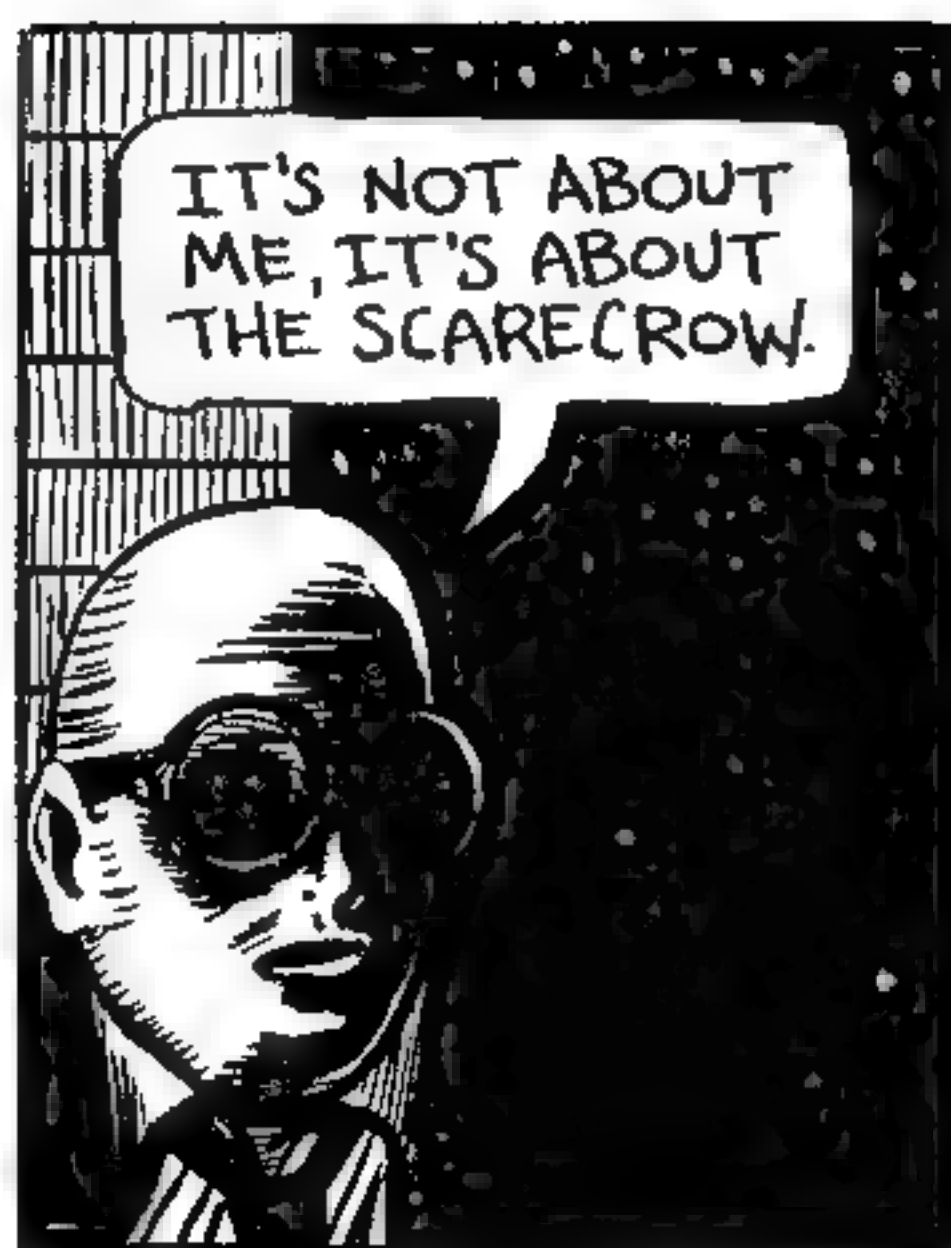


HE WAS A DRUNK
AND A LIAR!

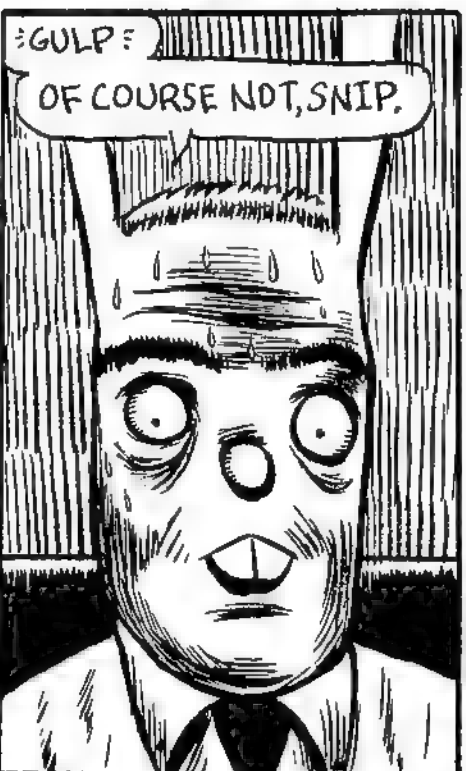
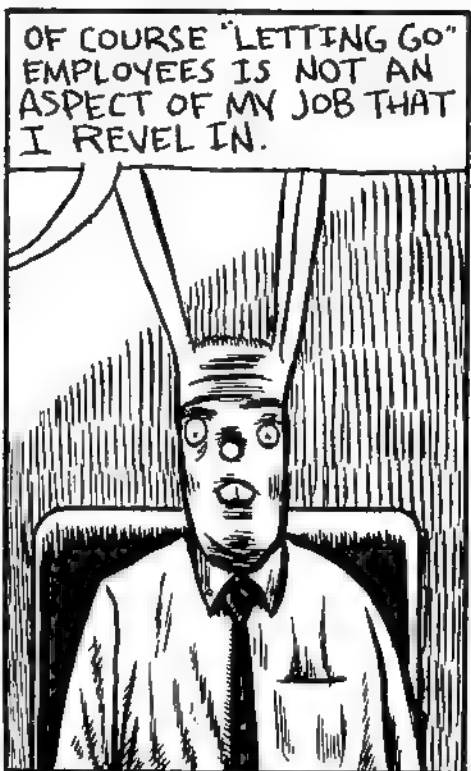
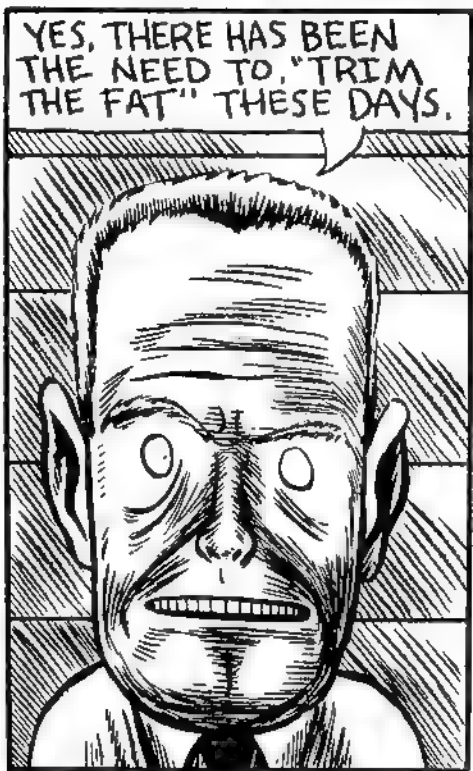
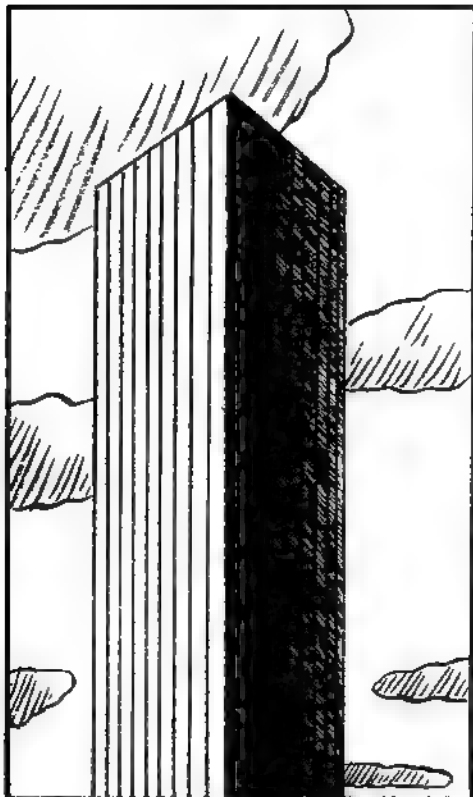


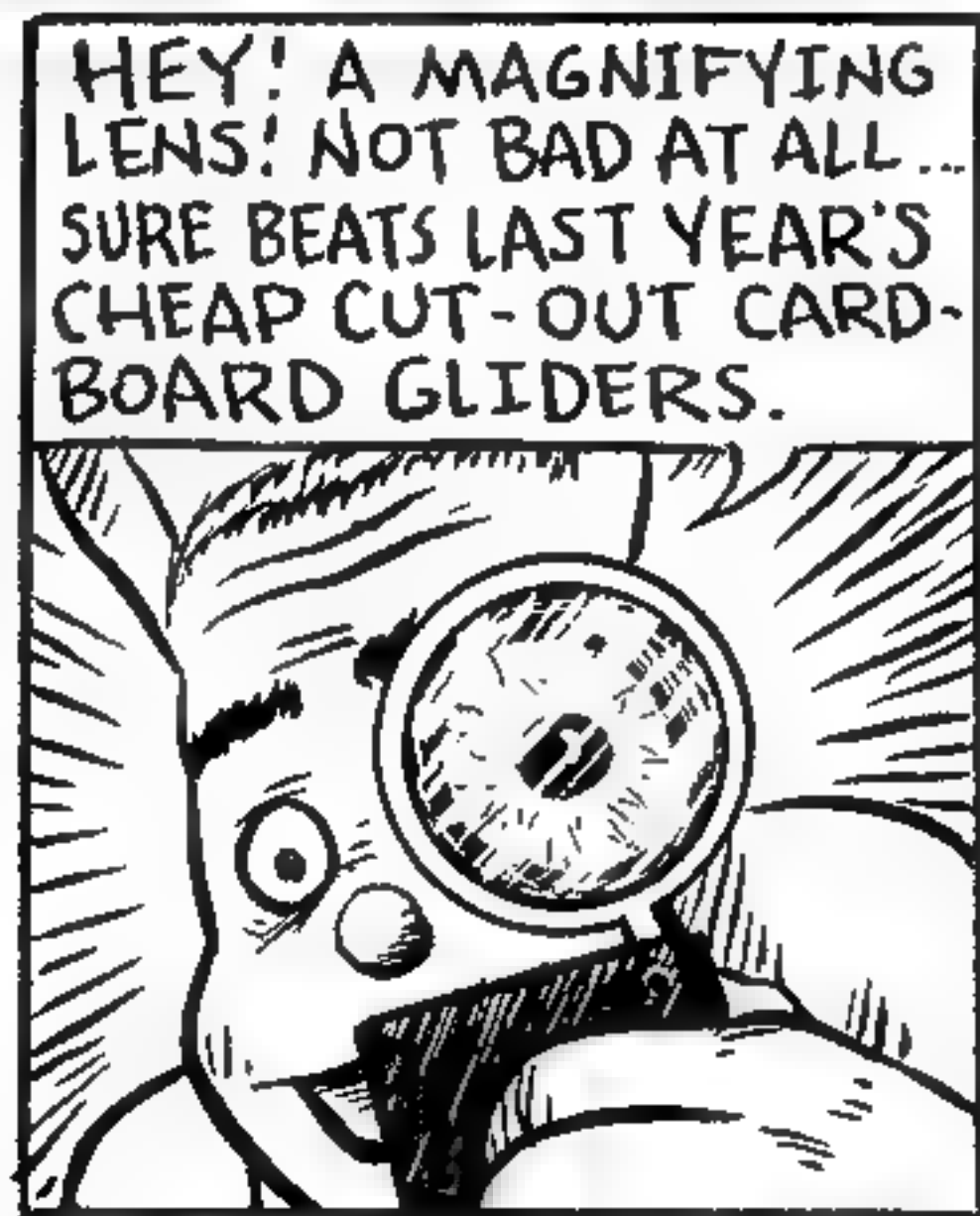












SURE, SURE, I SEE THEM
ALL- ROSS, FRANK, CAR-
BUNKLE, SHIRLAND...



YES... SHIRLAND, A TOUGH
DECISION LETTING HIM GO.
HEY, BUSINESS IS BUSINESS.



IF YOU CAN'T CUT THE
MUSTARD, STAY OUT OF
THE KITCHEN.

YES, WELL PUT.



DID YOU KNOW KELCOG IS
CONSIDERING A LINE OF
HEALTH FOOD CEREALS?

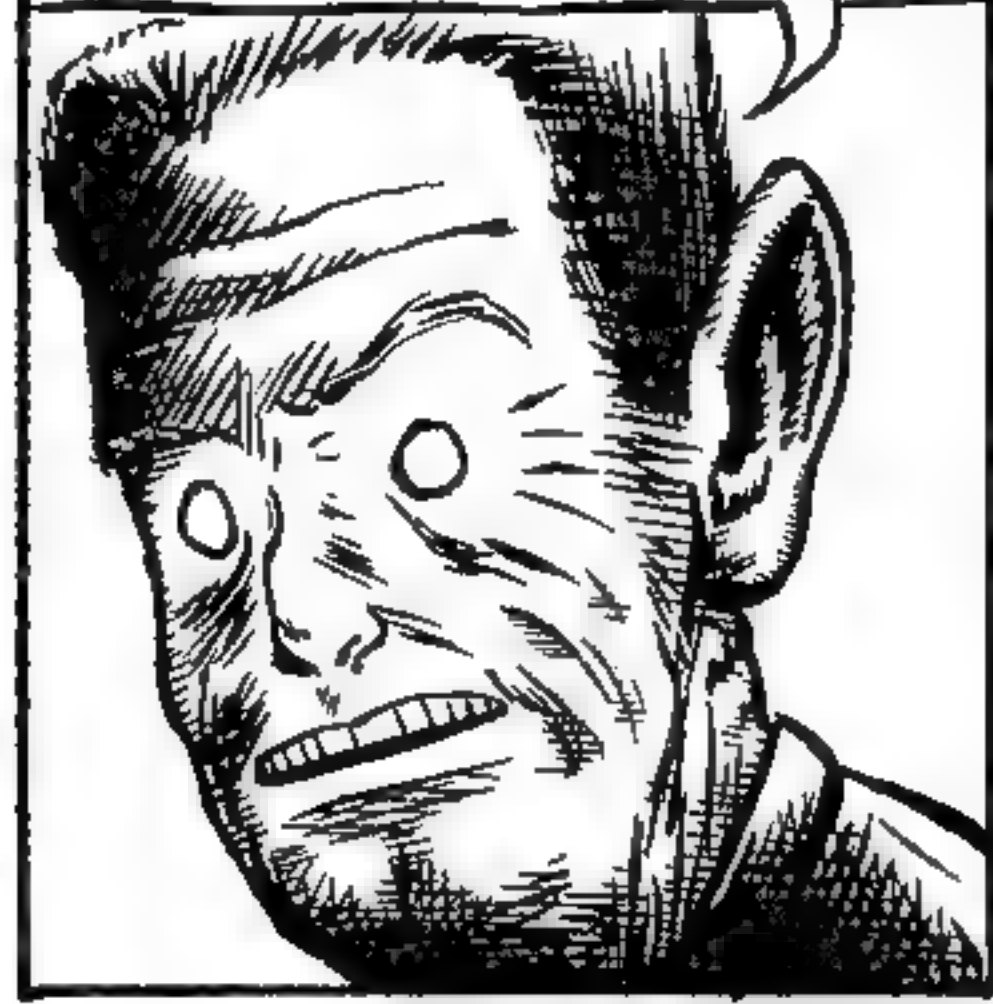


SO I HEAR, CARBUNKLE
HAS BEEN SAYING...

TELL ME, BURT...



WHAT EXACTLY HAS
CARBUNKLE BEEN SAYING?



HE'S CHASING AFTER SOME
LONG FORGOTTEN SCARE-
CROW NOW I HEAR HE'S
AFTER CHARLIE KESSLER.



REMEMBER CHARLIE?
HE'S CONVINCED THAT
CHIMP'S GOING TO
HELP HIM.



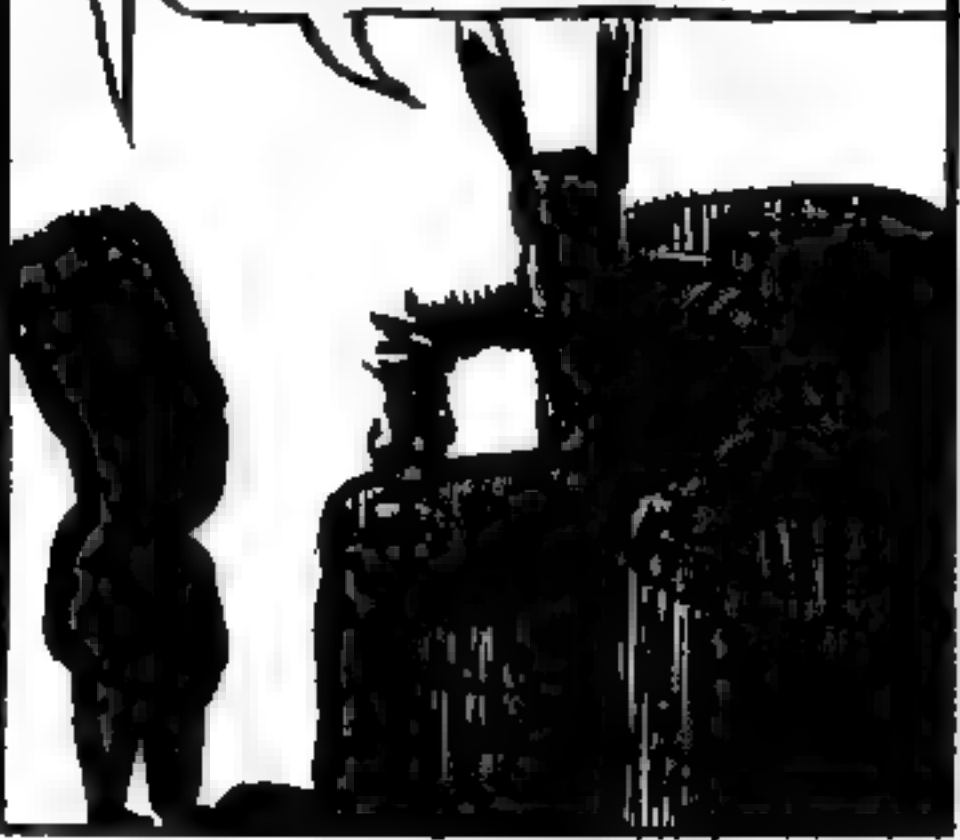
LAST TIME I SAW CHARLIE
HE COULD HARDLY HELP
HIMSELF WALK, IF YOU
KNOW WHAT I MEAN...



GLUG, GLUG.

NOW BURT, CARBUNKLE IS A
SMART MAN, SURELY HE
MUST HAVE SOME SORT OF
ULTERIOR MOTIVE...

ULTERIOR MOTIVE?



HE'S NUTS! THAT'S HIS
ULTERIOR MOTIVE.
BUT IT'S NOT JUST CARBUNKLE,



THE WHOLE COUNTRY IS
GOING TO SHIT. CARBUNKLE
IS JUST ANOTHER SHMUCK
WHOSE KICKSTAND DOESN'T
QUITE REACH THE GROUND!



AND IF YOU THINK
CARBUNKLE IS WHACKED
YOU SHOULD GET A LOAD
OF SCHMEDLY...



YEA, THAT DUMB LUMMOX,
ALL EDGY AND NERVOUS...

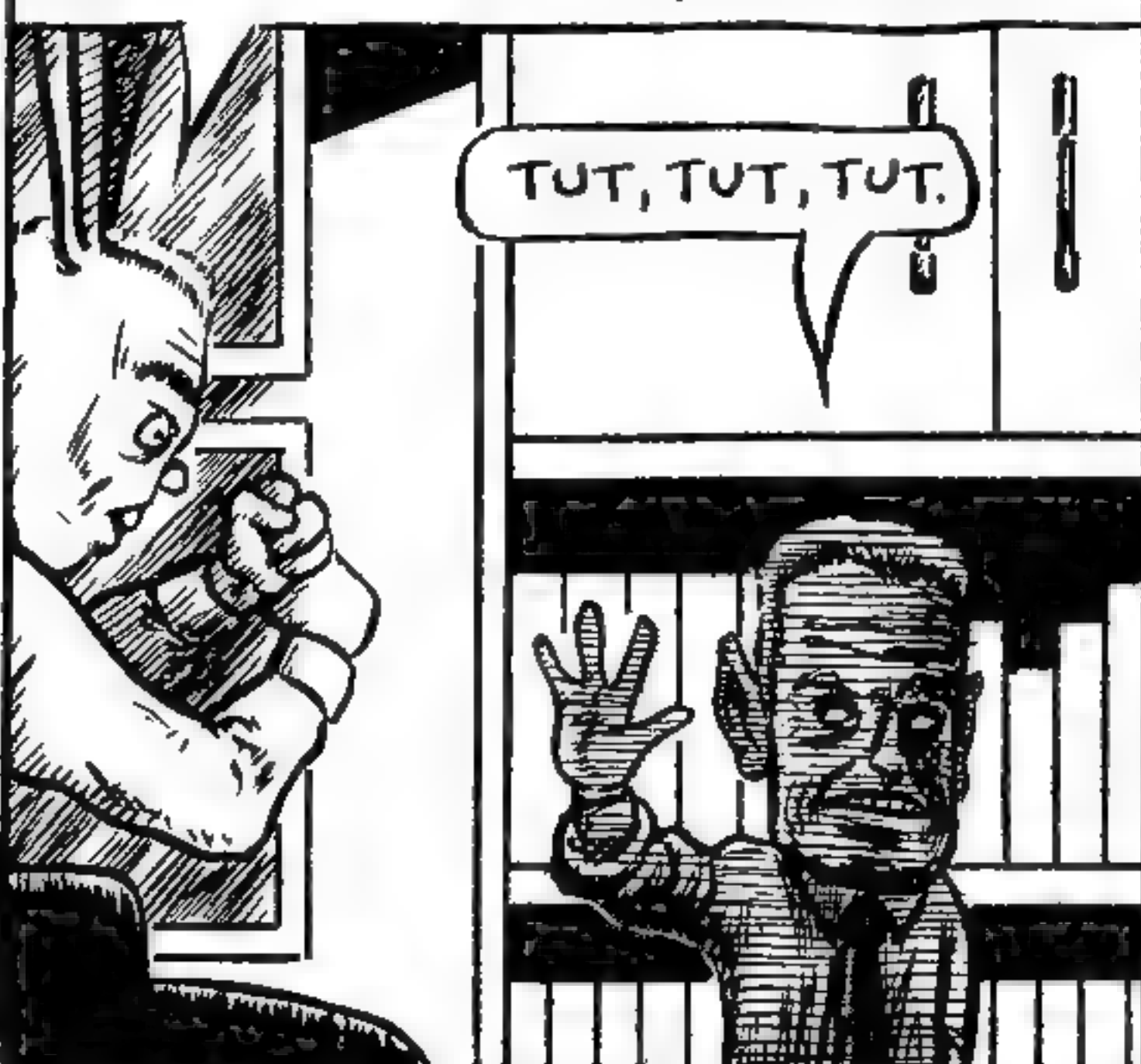
ABOUT? WHO KNOWS?
LIKE I SAID, THIS
ENTIRE COUNTRY IS
GOING TO SHIT!



BUT ENOUGH ABOUT ALL
THOSE LOSERS, LETS
TALK ABOUT ME.



I GOT THIS IDEA FOR A COMMERCIAL.
IT'S THE WORLD SERIES- SCORE IS
TIED- I STEP UP TO THE PLATE...



YOU'LL BE BIGGER THAN YOU'VE
EVER IMAGINED BUT FOR NOW
WE MUST TAKE THINGS ONE
STEP AT A TIME.



WE NEED NOT ONLY TO STAY
ABREAST OF TRENDS IN
THE INDUSTRY, WE NEED
TO ANTICIPATE.

AS YOUR FRIEND SHIRLAND
CAN ATTEST, IT'S A VERY
COMPETITIVE MARKET.



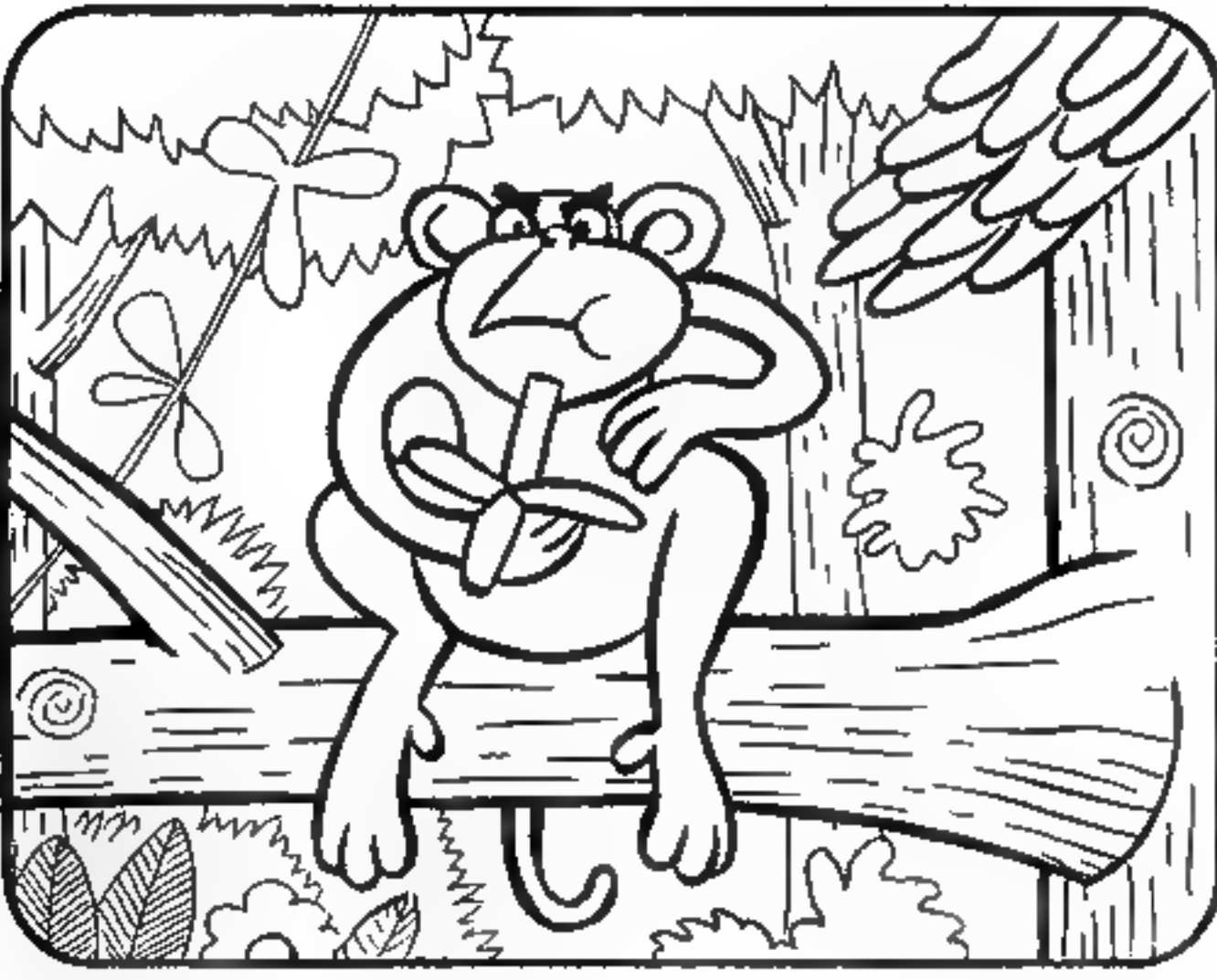
I EXPECT YOUR FULL
COOPERATION...

YOU HAVE BIG
EARS, BURT...

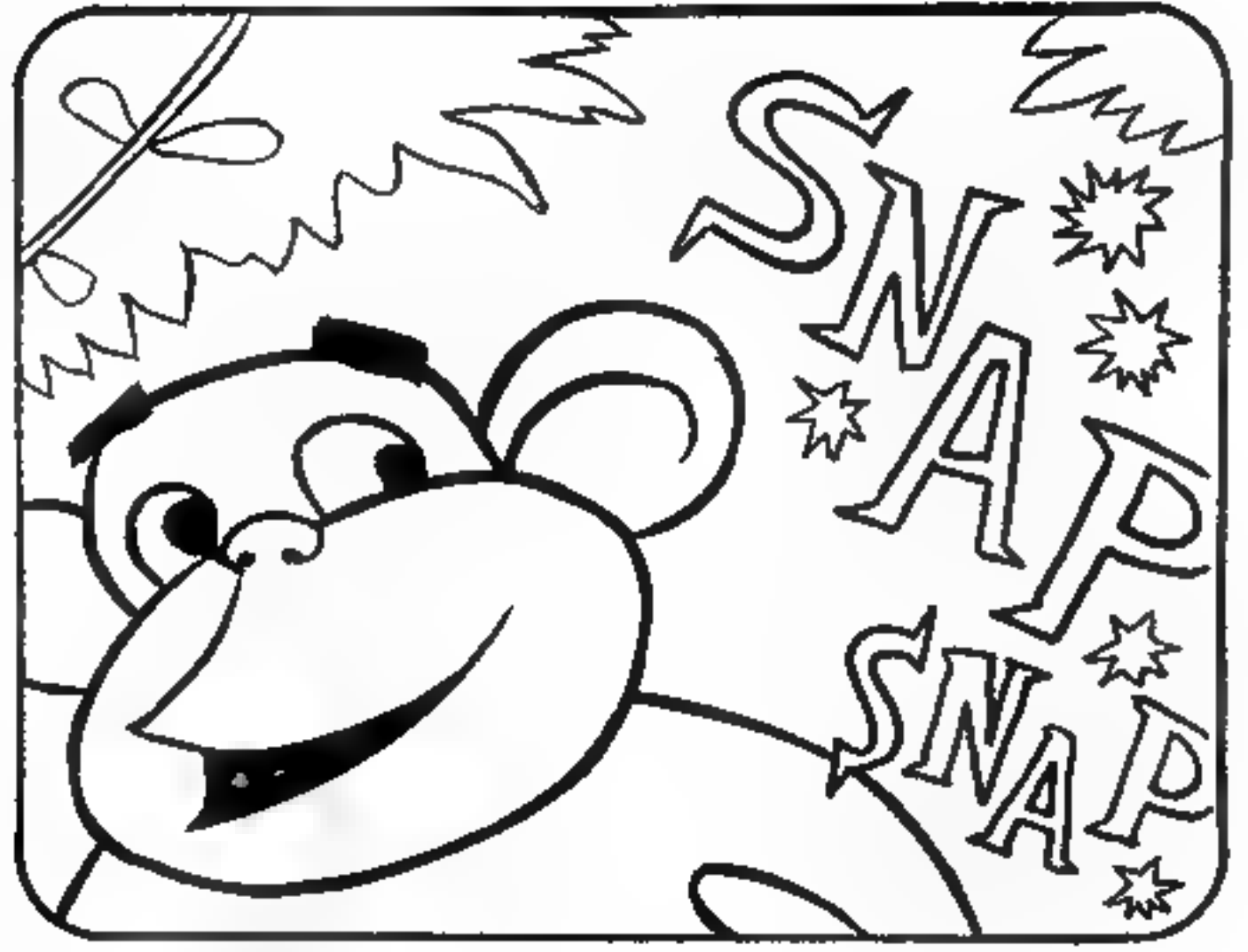


PUT THEM TO USE.





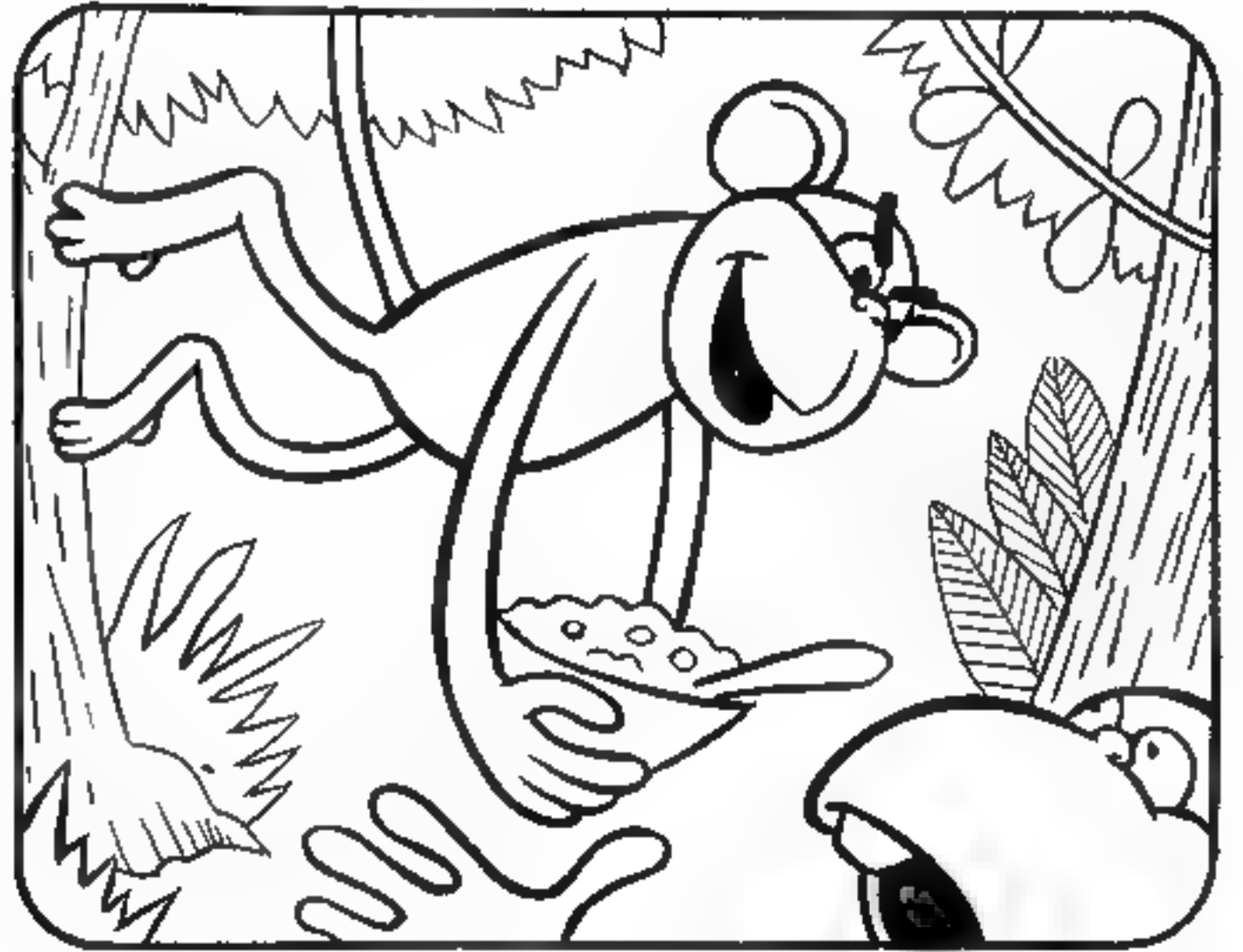
I HATE BANANAS...



HEY! I KNOW THAT SOUND...



BOING! BOING! BOING!



THANKS CHUMP!!



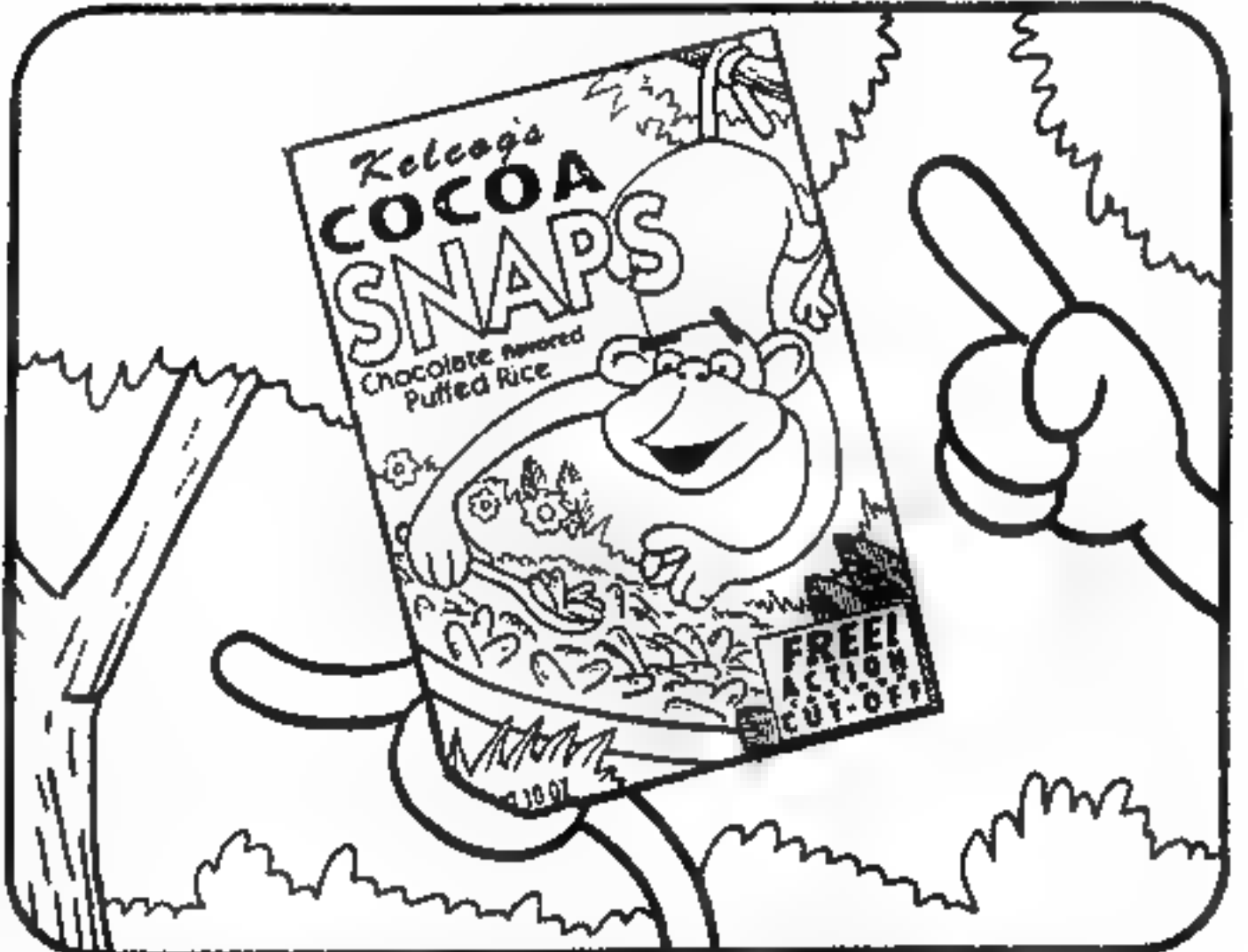
I LOVE COCOA SNAPS!



WHACK!

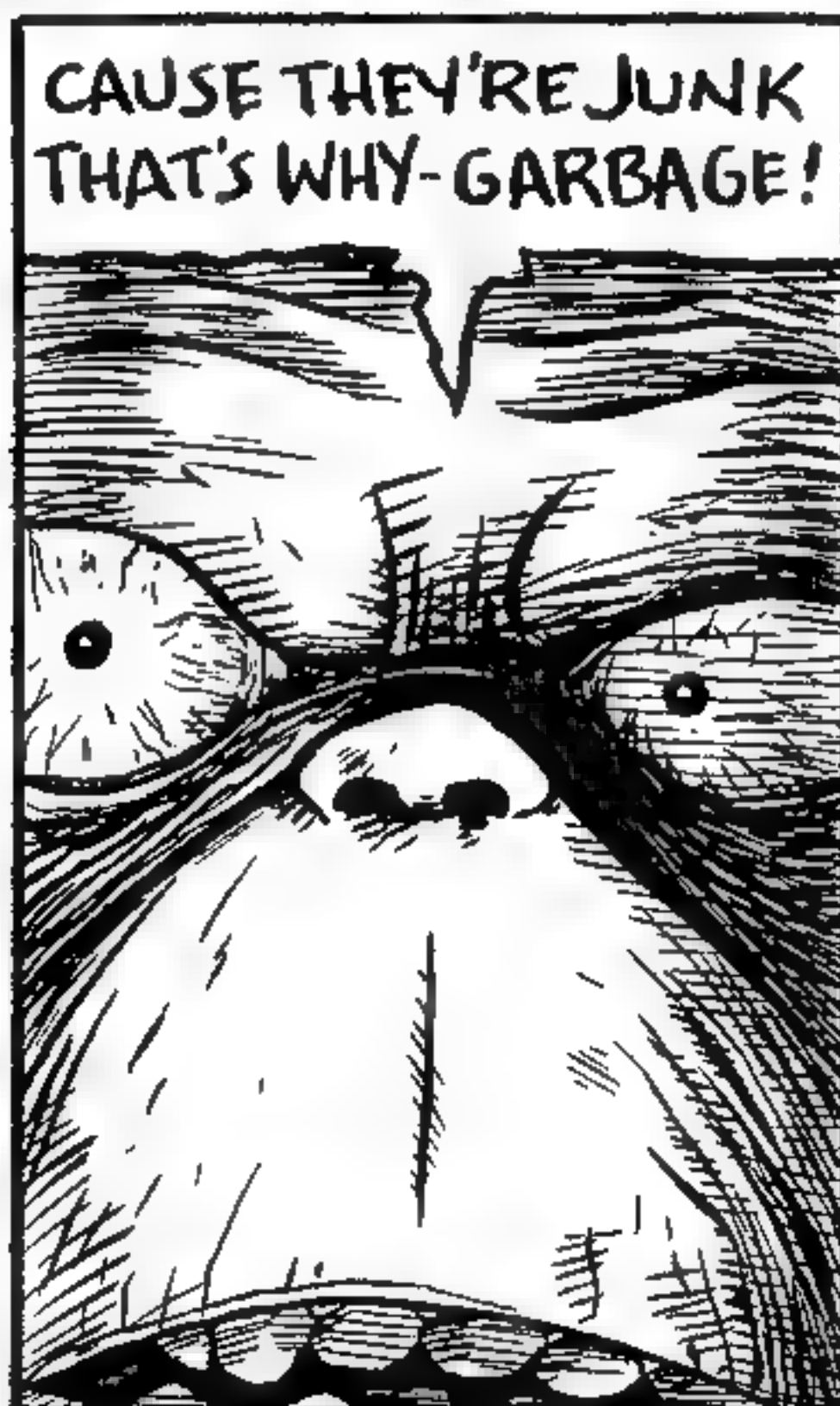
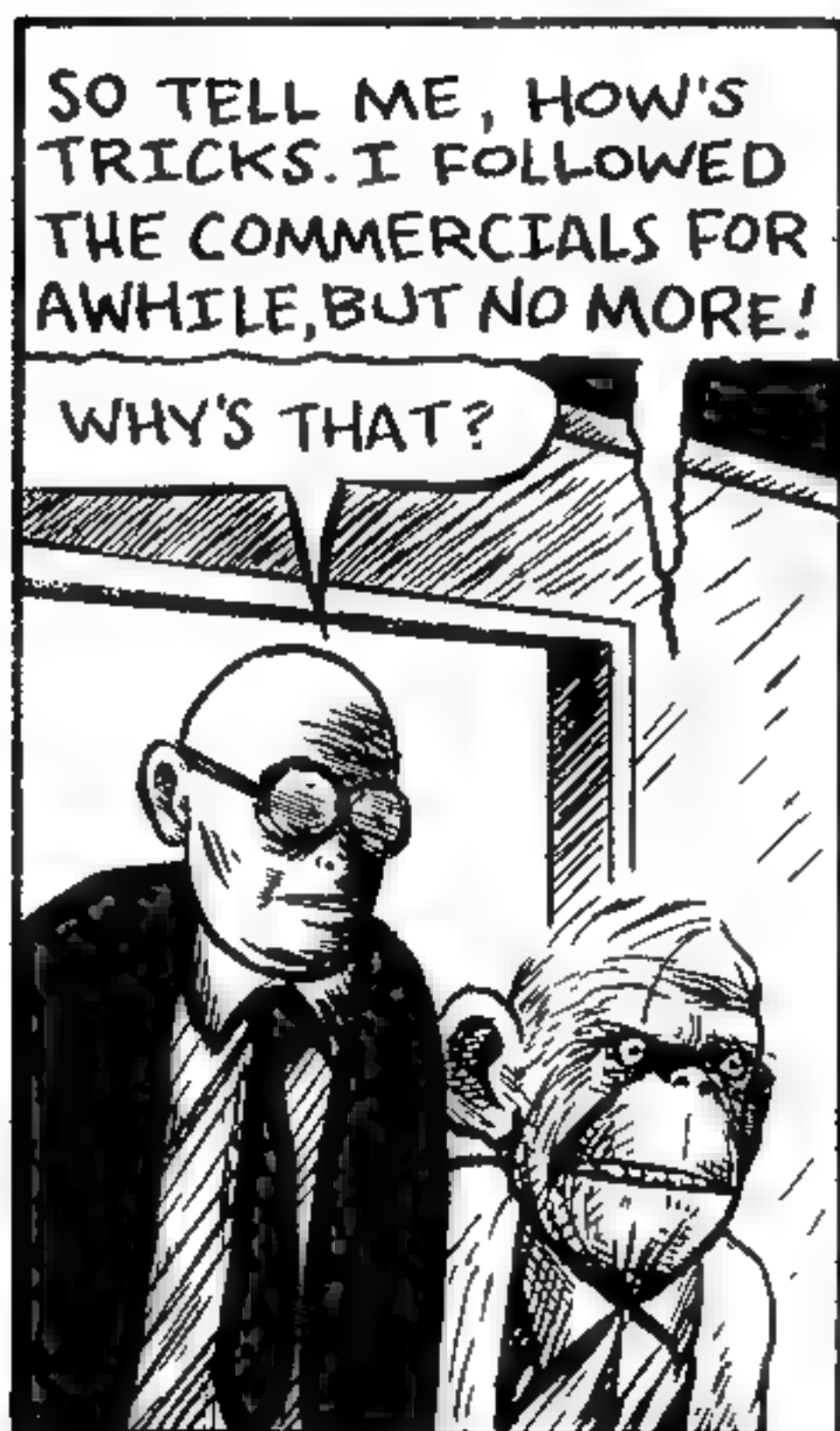
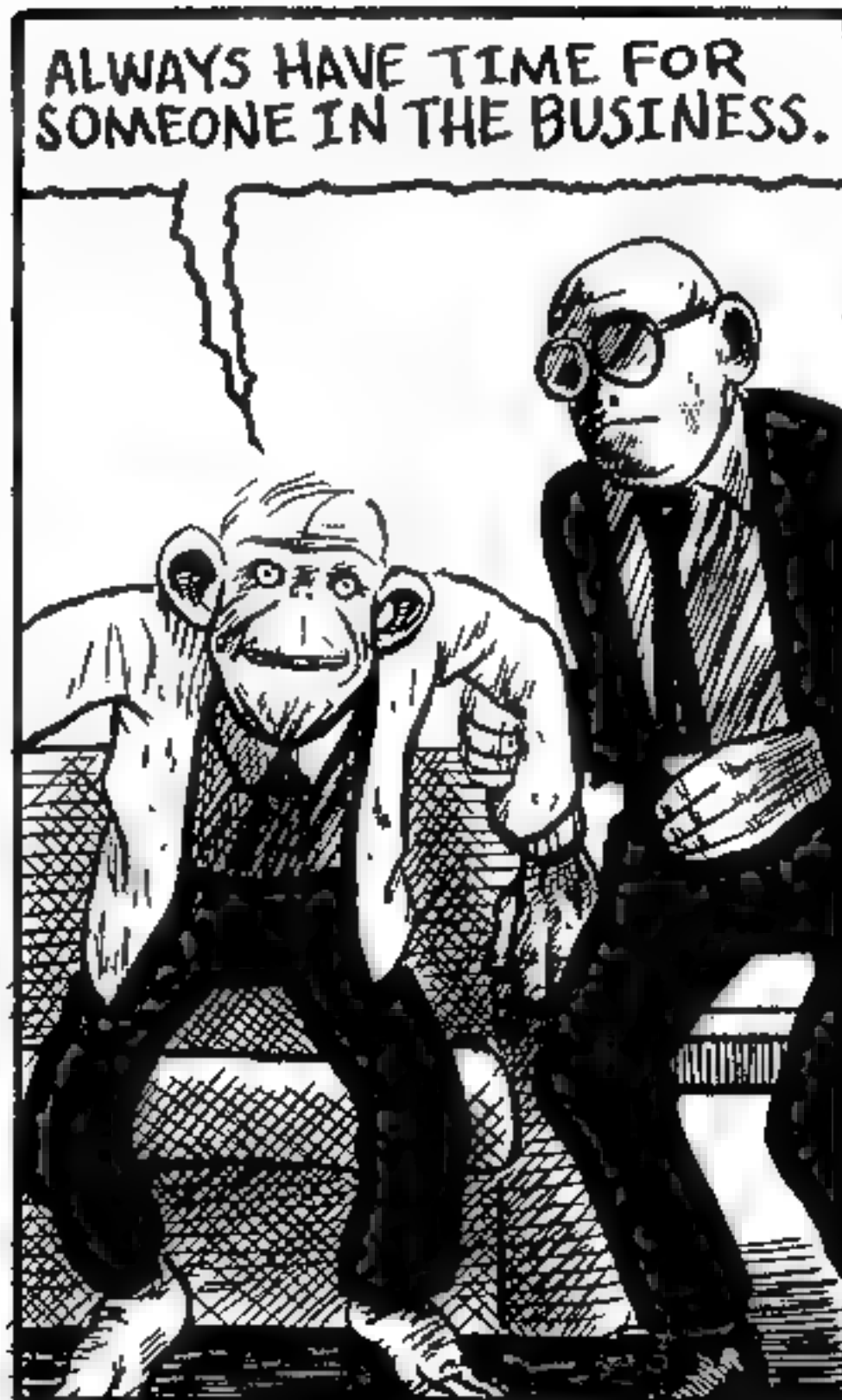


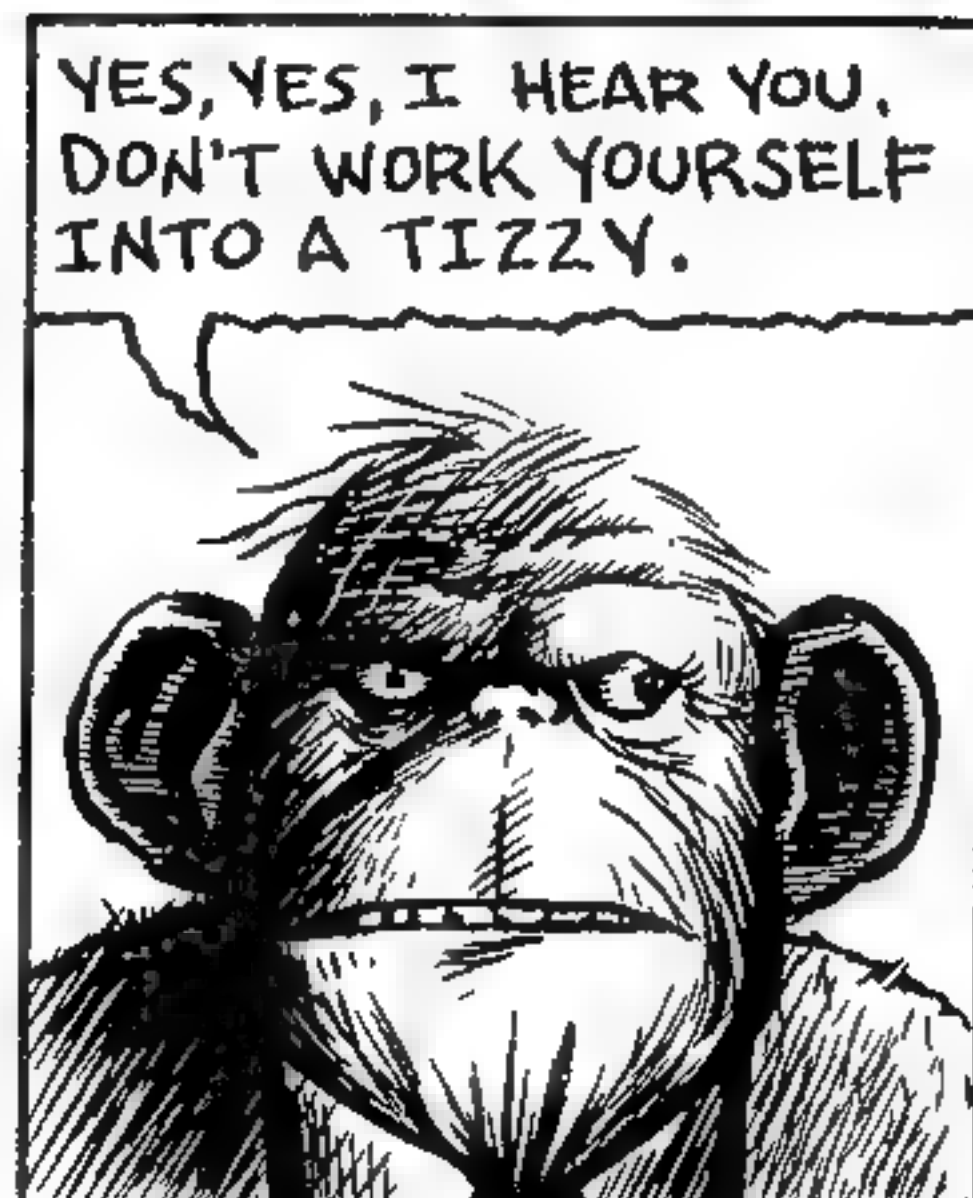
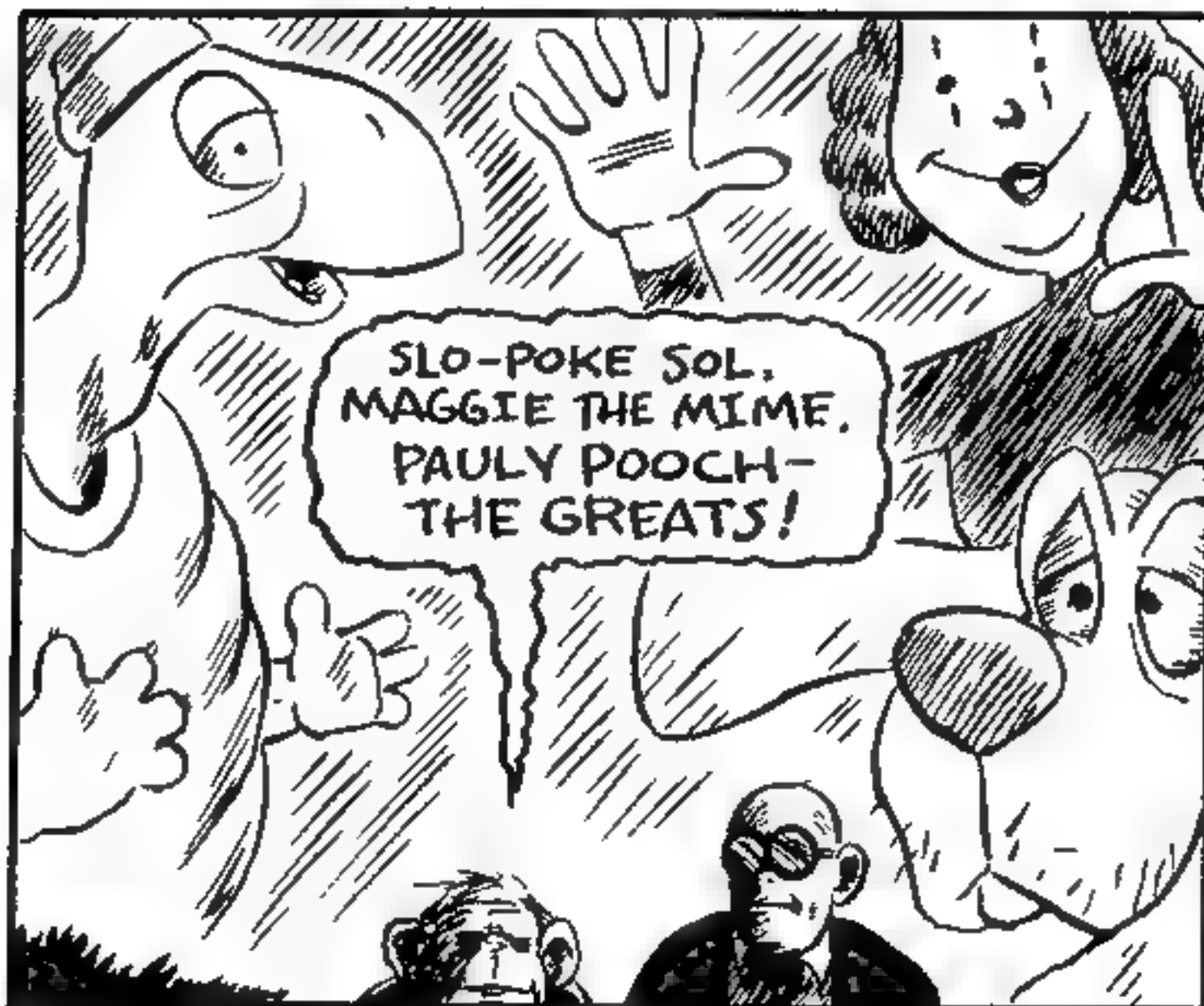
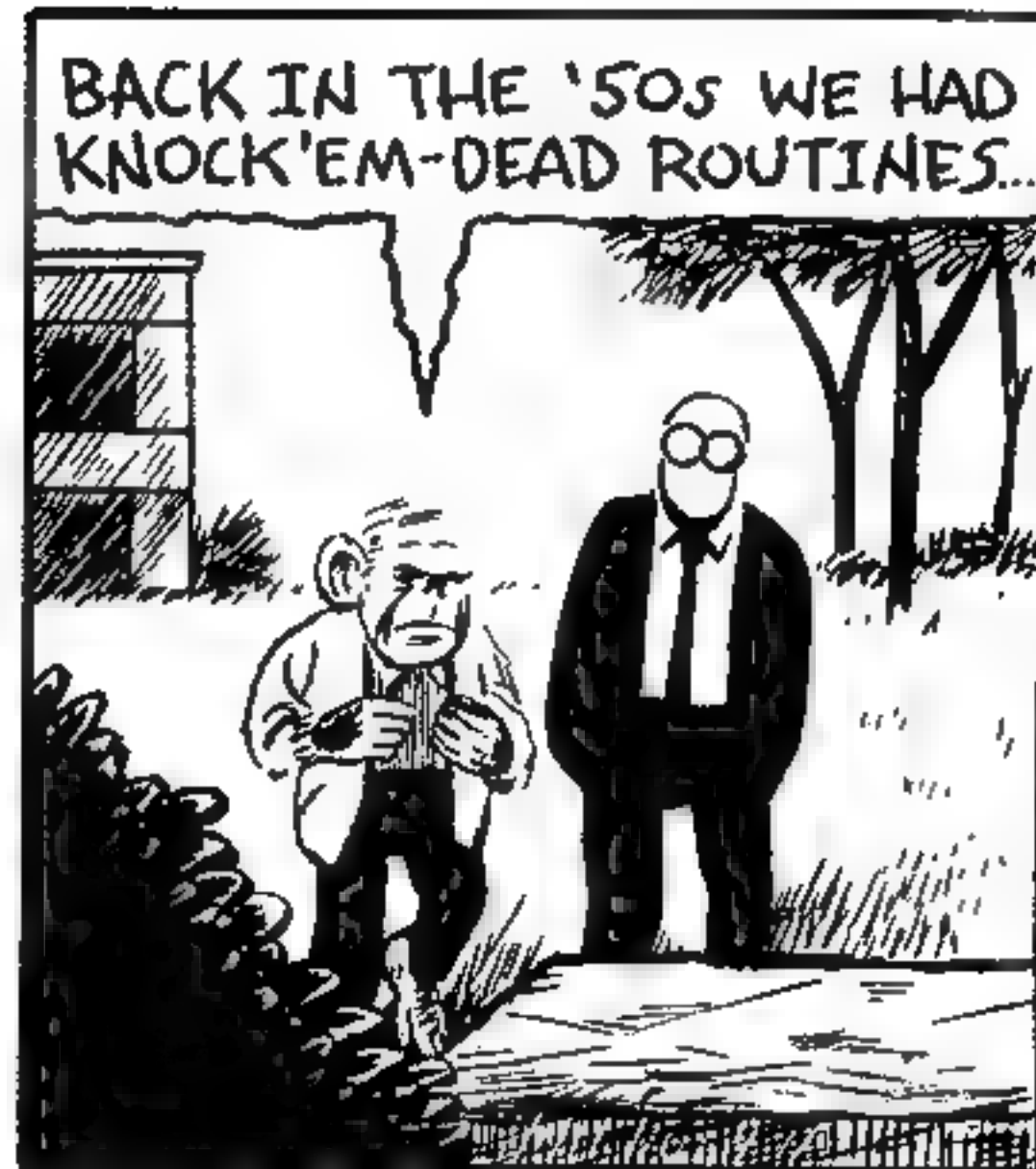
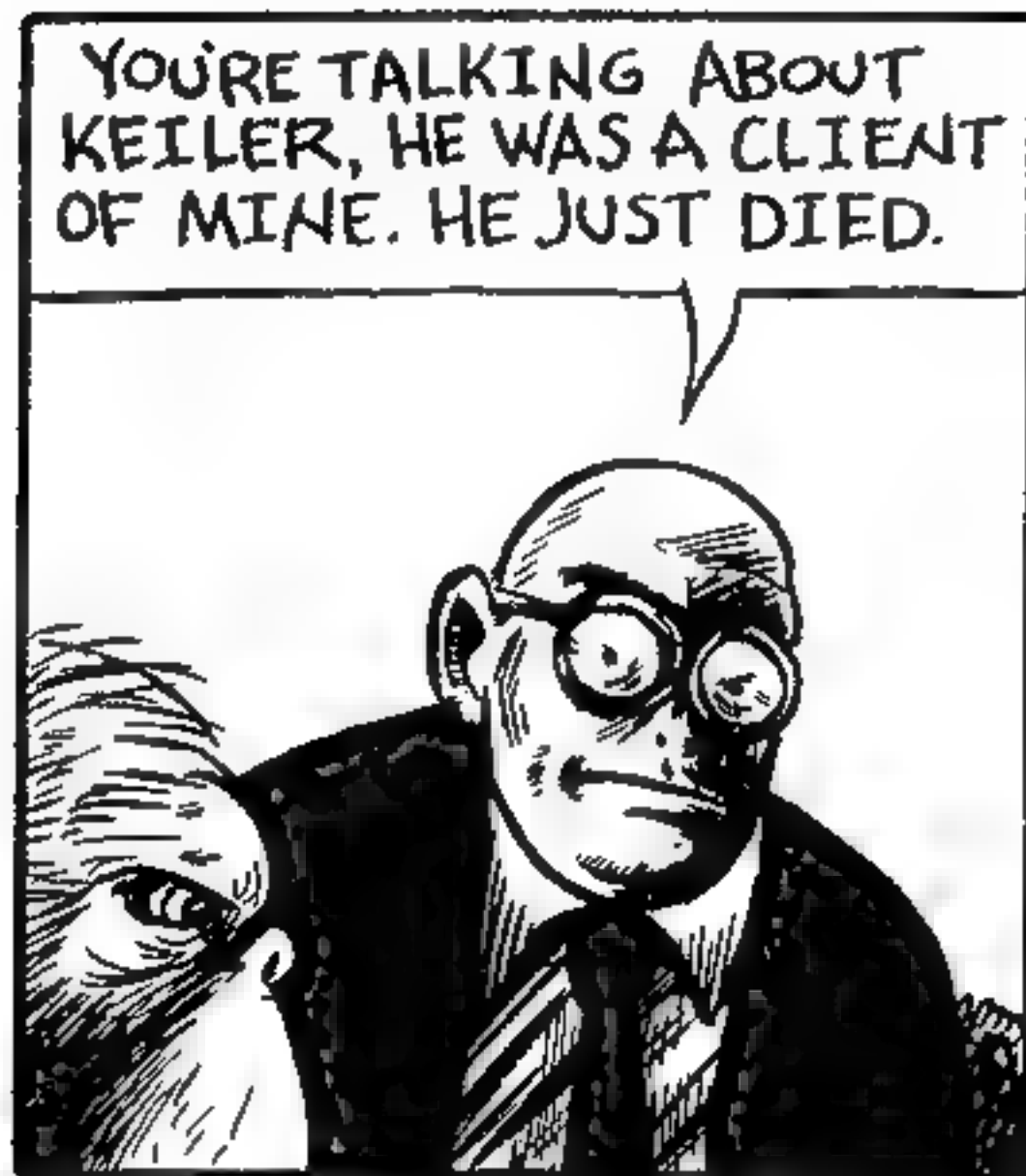
IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE.



That's right Charlie! That's why you should start your day with nutritious Cocoa Snaps. They're Cocoa Powered!







I'M AWARE OF THAT BUT AN OPPORTUNITY HAS PRESENTED ITSELF AND I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE IN HIS BEST INTEREST...



HE DOESN'T SELL CEREAL ANYMORE.



I UNDERSTAND THAT BUT ONCE HE REALIZES WHAT I'M OFFERING...



ALL I'M ASKING FOR IS A LITTLE HELP. AN ADDRESS, A PHONE NUMBER.



HE COMES, HE GOES. I HAVE NO ADDRESS, NO PHONE NUMBER.

HOW OFTEN DOES HE COME SEE YOU?



HE VISITS OFTEN.

ONCE A WEEK? ONCE A MONTH?

YES, THAT IS CORRECT.



HERE'S MY CARD, CHARLIE. IF THE SCARECROW DOES STOP IN, TELL HIM TO CONTACT ME...



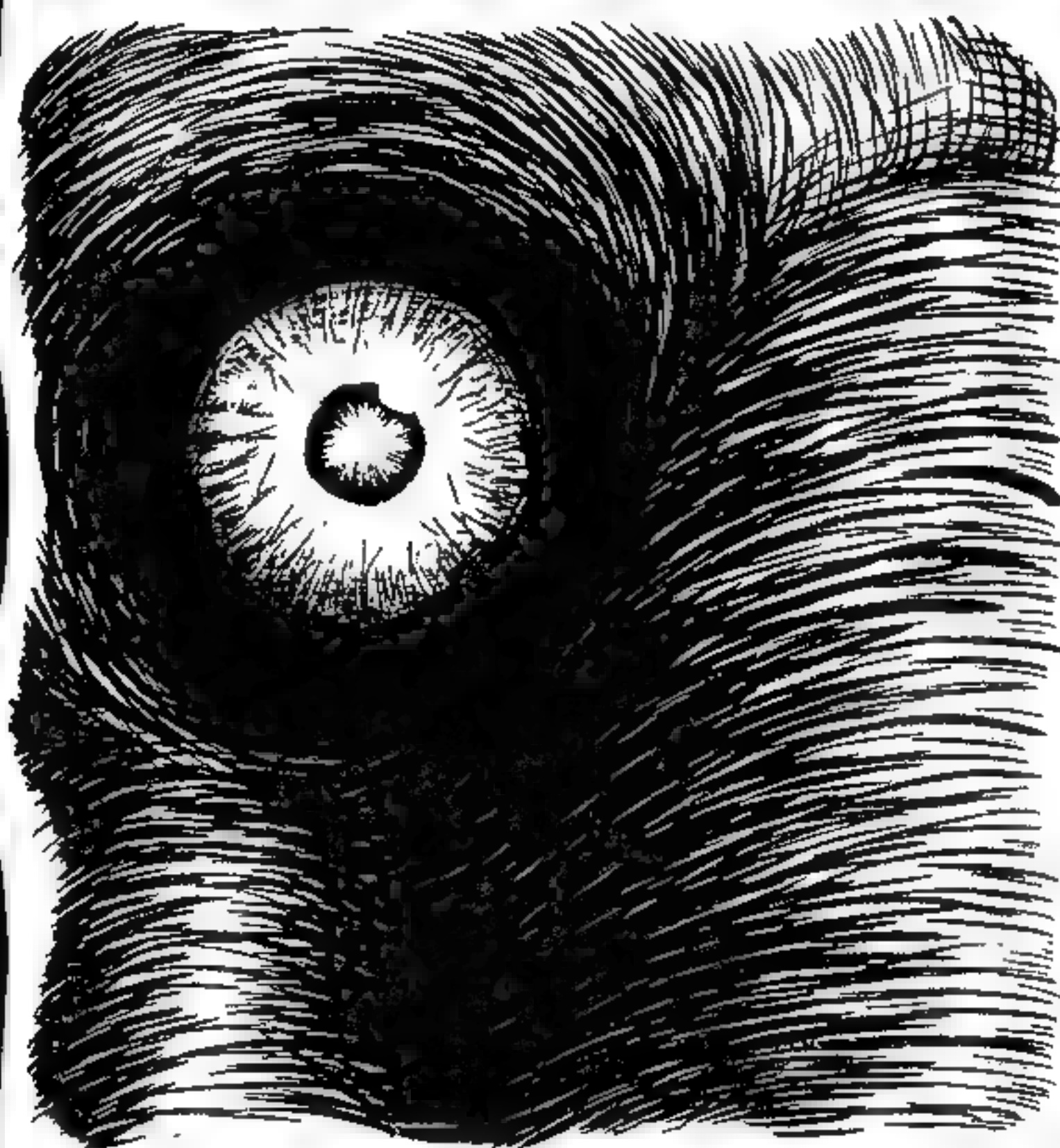
HOW ABOUT I COME BY NEXT WEEK, SAME TIME? PERHAPS THE SCARECROW CAN MEET US THEN.



FINE, FINE. I'LL LOOK FOWARD TO THAT. BRING LUNCH NEXT TIME. PASTRAMI.

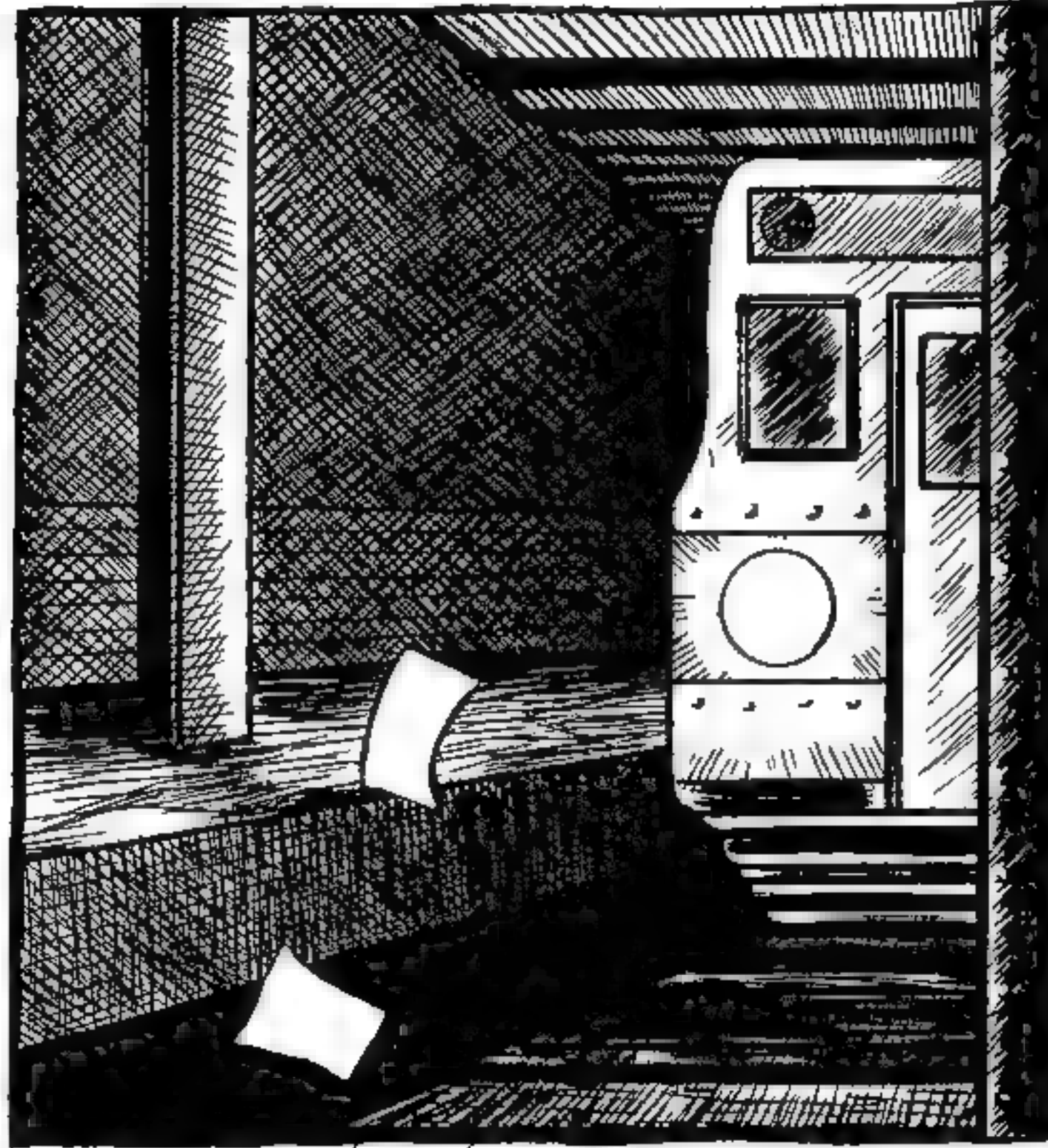
I LOVE PASTRAMI.





YOU MISERABLE THIEF.
YOU TURN MY STOMACH.



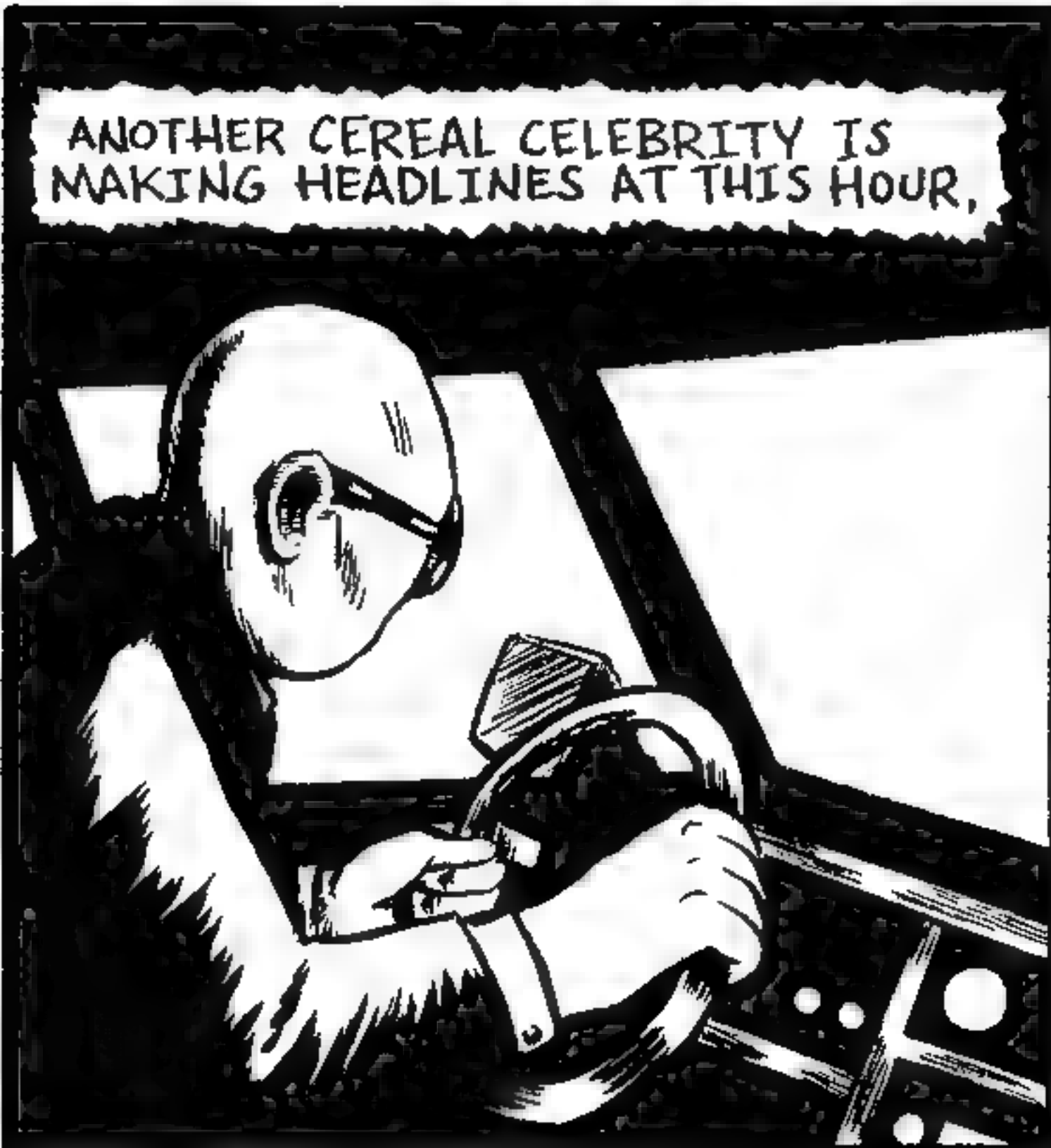




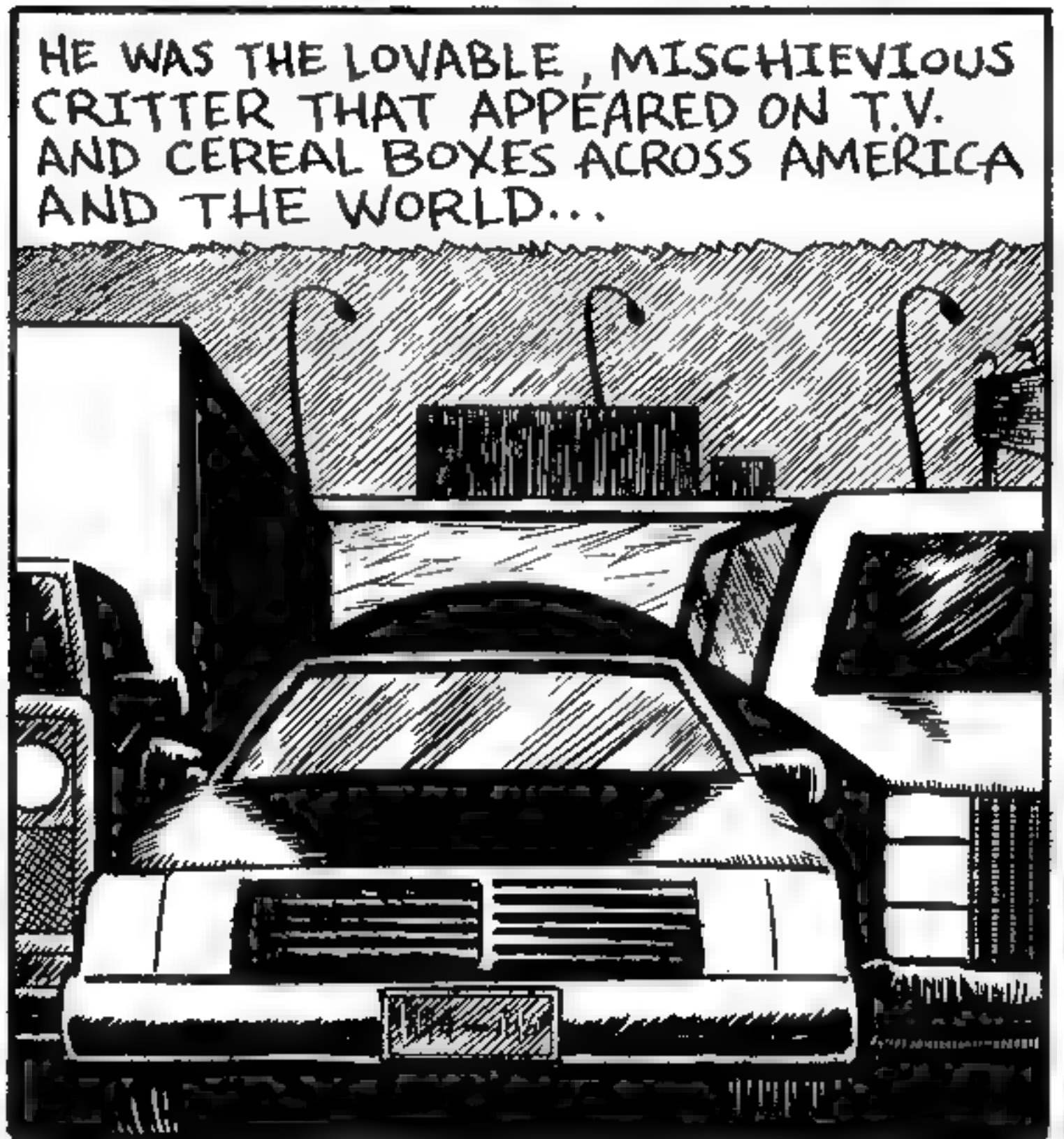
...F.D.A. APPROVING A
A NEW DRUG WHICH
TREATS THE SIDE
EFFECTS OF PROZAC.



THIS PORTION OF THE
NEWS IS BROUGHT TO YOU
BY ZAPRIN™ - ZAPS
THE PAIN, SO YOU CAN
GET ON WITH YOUR LIFE!



ANOTHER CEREAL CELEBRITY IS
MAKING HEADLINES AT THIS HOUR,



HE WAS THE LOVABLE, MISCHIEVIOUS
CRITTER THAT APPEARED ON T.V.
AND CEREAL BOXES ACROSS AMERICA
AND THE WORLD...



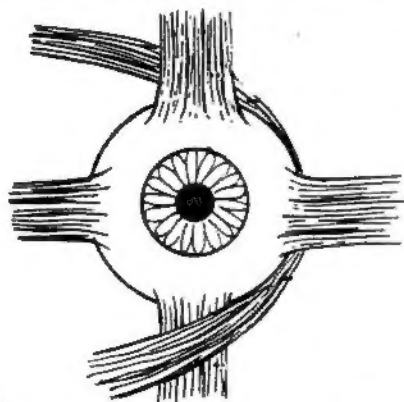
KNOWN TO MILLIONS AS
"SURE-SHOT" SHIRLAND,



TODAY, REGINAL SHIRLAND
BAKER III IS DEAD AT THE
AGE OF 43.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Write: James Sturm
5531 28th Avenue NE
Seattle, WA 98105



From here on in, the Cereal Killings will be published twice a year. Any more frequent and the product would suffer. One of the reasons for the delay in this issue's publication was three retinal surgeries. I thank Dr. Vincent RePucci and Karen Land for their help in restoring my vision.

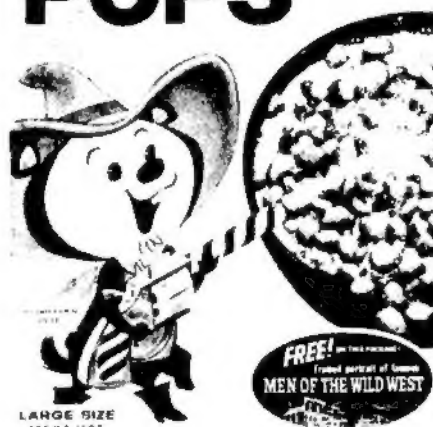
Mr. Sturm-

Cereal-boxed-in people can't always understand why I think that quirky, retroactive, psychological trivia is so much the foundation of understanding ourselves. I can find the meaning of life in the craziest of crooks and crannies. To me there is a Kafka sine-qua-non in the *Cereal Killings*. I thrive on the value of the undercurrents implied when Schmedley says "suit yourself" to the philosophically aware scarecrow (issue two) because he refuses a drink or the bowllegged bifurcation of the personification of Cerealebrities. Did I say "personification"? Well, those guys are real to me anyway. I mean, would you murder the imaginary friend of a child? Sure, why not? Greed is a lusty bed-fellow and it is an "imaginary" friend, right?

Well, I don't want to lose you (or myself) in analysis (but if you are interested in more, I'm going to do a deconstructionist analysis of your book for an English class). My reason for writing you stems from a stream-of-consciousness that goes like this: In the business section of the *Seattle P-I* today

there was an article about how everybody pays lip service to vision and yet so few actually follow through. My mind bissocrated this with your visionary work. Then I started feeling a little guilty about callously killing off some similar ideas of my own by not seeing them fulfilled. Idead? I realize that I'm not the only one. It takes a rare focused determination to germinate and explore the possibilities of something so full of growth potential as a pun on "serial/cereal." (Or did the idea come first as I am starting to suspect and then the punny title?) And then I further realized that another thing I regularly murder are good intentions and since I didn't want to be party to that kind of cruelty any

Kellogg's
**SUGAR
POPS**



longer I decided to let this intention live a happy life and send you a letter letting you know how much I appreciate the fact that you have what it takes to get your vision across the plane to me in the form of art. Thank you.

And if you print this then I would like to encourage everyone who is creative enough to pick up this literature to fan the embers of your own genius and forge something important and magical in the fire.

Adam DeGraff
Seattle, WA

Dear Mr. Sturm,

So tell me, Do *the Screaming Ernies* have any albums out? If

so, where can I find them? I've been asking at local record stores, but nobody seems to have heard of the group.

Phillip J. Flores
Amity, OR

To the best of my knowledge the Screaming Ernies only exist as a poster on the cover of Cereal Killings #4.

Dear James,

While I appreciate you taking the metaphor "you are what you eat" as far as you have, I wonder if it is an accurate metaphor. Some of the "healthiest" eaters I know are also the most uptight. But in any event, I enjoy your comic and look foward to future issues.

Pam Yenawine
Lorain, OH

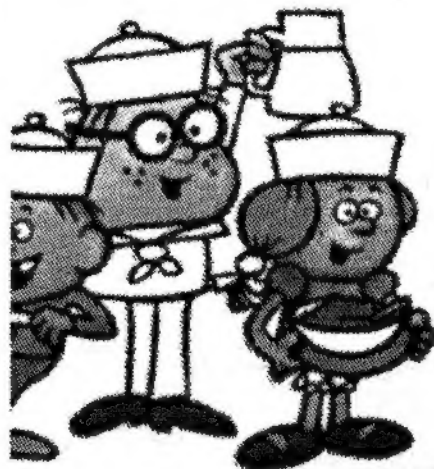
I would agree with you for the most part. Lately I've been feeling that how you eat may be as important if not more important than what you are eating. Is the food savored and enjoyed? Eaten compulsively, in a tense environment? Gobbled down while driving? In any case, something to consider.

Dear Mr Sturm,

O.K., Burt the Rabbit seems to be based on the Trix Rabbit. Snip the Elf from Snap, Crackle, and Pop. Shirland is Sugar Pop Pete. Schmedly from Peanut Butter Cap'n Crunch.

So where the hell did Brenda and Carbunkle come from?

G. Wierth
New York, NY



Does this answer your question?

Howya James!

I just thought I'd drop you a few lines to tell you how great I think *the Cereal Killings* is. I get the impression that you're getting far, far less recognition than you deserve for this comic. I mean, if I had any say in the matter, *the Cereal Killings* would easily win any awards for best new comic of the year. But does it even get nominated?

I've just read issue #3 and I think your work is getting stronger. The main story is gaining greater depth from episode to episode. There are few cartoonists attempting long pieces of this kind.

Your approach to comics coincides with what I think is the way to best use the medium. Everything stripped down to the minimum, thus making what appears on the page more effective—changes in panel size, dark borders, introduction of different rendering techniques.

And, just as important, the story is great, and really well unravelled. Keep up the good work, you can only get better.

Peter Keogh
Dublin, Ireland



Mr. Sturm,

I came across this passage about Cap'n Crunch in the Jay Ward issue of *Flake, the Breakfast Nostalgia Magazine*.

"New breakfast cereals were developed in the laboratory and then handed over to merchandisers for naming, packaging, promotion, and mar-

keting. The most successful cereal of the decade reversed that order. The idea for the new cereal was first hatched, then a cereal was cooked up to meet the specifications that marketing men drew up."

And this was quoted from Quaker's official history (!) — *Brands, Trademarks, and Goodwill*.

To me the implications of this process are chilling. Something seems way out of balance. Food's primary function is no longer food, it is now entertainment—subservient to fashion, fads, and fancy. No wonder our society is crumbling. Judging from your comic, I thought you could appreciate this. Keep up the good work.

Katherine Matsui
San Francisco, CA

Speaking of Jay Ward, I received in the mail an 18 pg newsletter—The Frostbite Falls Far-Flung Flier, a publication "devoted to Rocky and his friends, the Bullwinkle Show, and other Jay Ward Shows." Subscriptions are \$10 for four issues: FFFF, P.O. Box 39, Macedonia, OH 44056-0039

Dear James,

I'm traveling in India, the city of Udaipur, and the streets are teeming with activity. There is a festival happening. Being carried is a giant paper-

mache float of an elephant-Ganeesh, a Hindu god of prosperity. My mind goes back to childhood Thanksgivings in



New Glarus, WI, watching the Thanksgiving Day floats bob down Fifth Avenue on the television set. The Nestle Quick Bunny, Holly Hobby, Ronald McDonald... these are our cultural deities, our cultural mythology.

During my travels, I was given an issue of your comic. I'm pleased to see you're depicting an accurate representation of the symbols and icons that have affixed themselves to universal archetypes (like parasites) and poison us with their warped truths.

Frank Wenders
At Large

James—

It ain't braggin' if it's true, is it?

Dave Bristol
Brookline, Mass

No Dave, it ain't.

**NEXT ISSUE: MORE THRILLS, CHILLS AND SPILLS
WITH YOUR FAVORITE CEREAL CHARACTERS!**



ITS A JUNGLE OUT THERE!

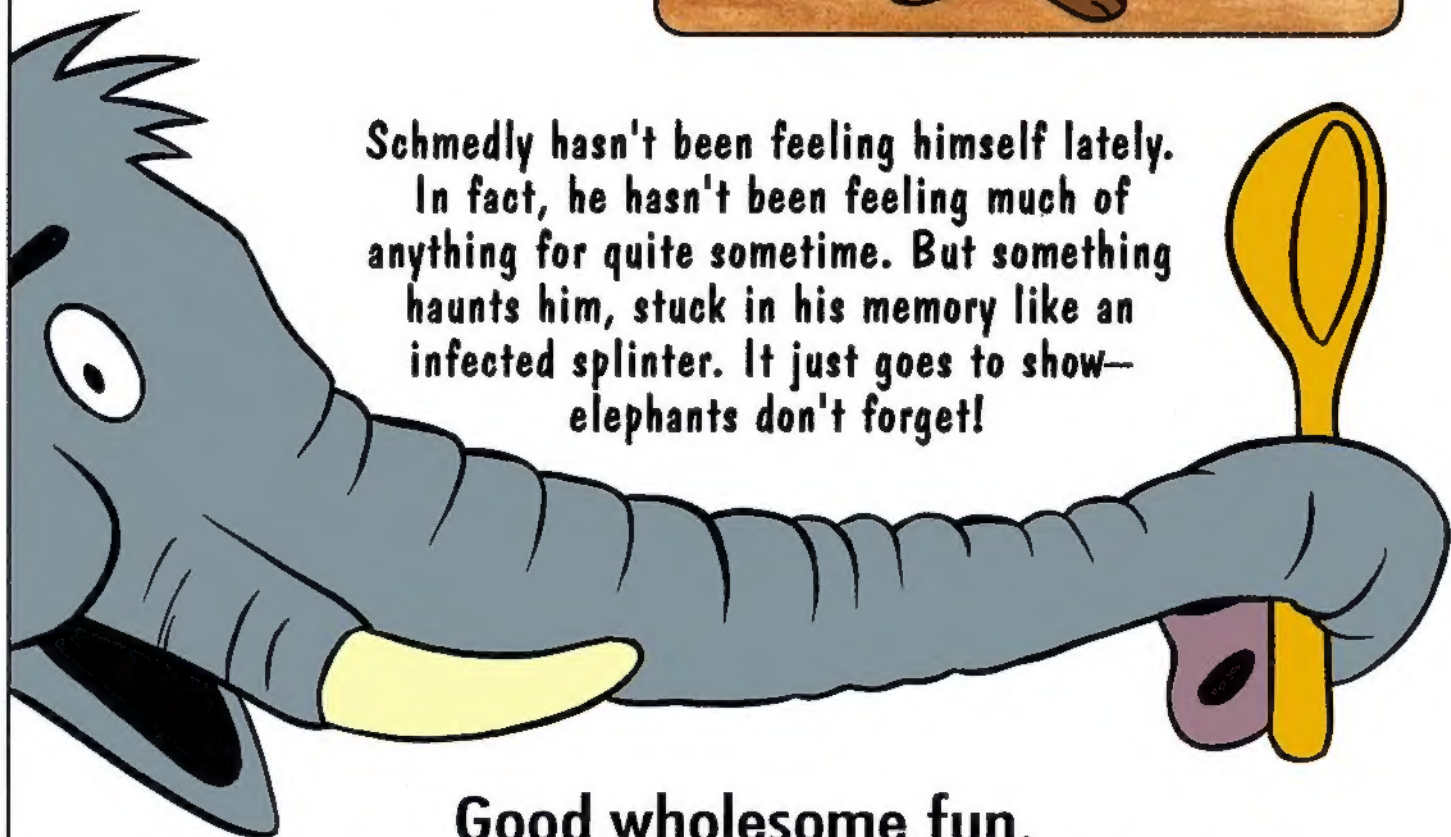


Ain't it the truth. Take poor Charlie for instance, he's just not the swinger he once was. Some call it living in the past; others, senility. Have the years been unkind to him, or has he never been able to see the forest for the trees?

All bets are off! Or at least they should be for this gambling fella. "Sure-shot" Shirland is out of a job and out of luck! He's trying to come up with some money, but so far he's only managed to misfire.



Schmedly hasn't been feeling himself lately. In fact, he hasn't been feeling much of anything for quite sometime. But something haunts him, stuck in his memory like an infected splinter. It just goes to show—elephants don't forget!



Good wholesome fun.
THE CEREAL KILLINGS.